

**HANDBOOK**

**LAY SPEAKING**

**IN THE UNITED**

**METHODIST**

**CHURCH**



# HANDBOOK: LAY SPEAKING IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Basic guidance for conference and district leaders responsible for training lay persons in effective communication and for administering the lay speaker program.

## CONTENTS

What Is Lay Speaking? .....	3	Service Opportunities for Lay Speakers .....	9
The Roots of Lay Speaking .....	3	Resources for the Lay Speaking Program .....	9
Who Is Responsible for Lay Speaking? .....	4	Appendix .....	10
Organizing for Lay Speaking .....	5	1. Lay Speaking in the 1976 <i>Book of Discipline</i>	
Certification of Lay Speakers .....	6	2. Annual Report of the Lay Speaker	
Training for Lay Speakers .....	6	3. Application for Certification As a Lay Speaker	

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California

Prepared by Richard S. Smith, staff, Division of Lay Life and Work, Board of Discipleship,  
The United Methodist Church, 1977.

## WHAT IS LAY SPEAKING?

- On the fourth Sunday of each month, Bill Brown, in the absence of the pastor, conducts services at Jones Chapel, one of seven churches on the Sandy Creek Charge.
- Margaret Jones leads the Wednesday evening Bible study and prayer group in her local church for six months every year.
- On the third Sunday of September, January, March, and June, Susan Barnes and Mary Griffin conduct services at the Sweetwater United Methodist Home.
- Beth Harrington serves as liturgist in the Sunday services of her local church twelve to fifteen times each year.
- June Graves is a popular speaker at civic groups in her community on moral and religious issues.
- Joe Smith talks excitedly at the coffee table in the cafeteria about his Christian experience.
- John Brown was called on Saturday night by the district superintendent and asked to lead worship at the Haynes Valley Church the next morning because the pastor was ill.

Who are these people? They are all members of The United Methodist Church. But they have more than that in common. They are also all lay speakers: persons who have taken training to develop their skills in Christian witness through spoken communication and worship leadership and who have been certified by a district or conference committee as lay speakers, after being recommended by the Administrative Board or Charge Conference and pastor in their local church.

What is lay speaking? Lay speaking is a program of The United Methodist Church designed to help lay persons develop their skills in Christian witness through spoken communication.

Lay speaking is service through the witness of the spoken word in ways that inspire persons to deeper

commitment to Christ and more effective churchmanship.

Lay speaking is active participation in the support of the program emphases of the local church.

Lay speaking is the conduct of worship services and the leadership of meetings for prayer, study, and discussion.

Lay speaking provides opportunity for persons to conduct worship services and present sermons, speeches, and messages in other local churches and before community and civic groups.

Lay speaking involves the utilization of skills in spoken communication in Christian witness.

This is all stated more fully for us in the words of our *Book of Discipline* (¶ 270).

1. A *lay speaker* is a member of a local church who is well informed on the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church and who has received specific training to develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication.
2. Lay speakers are to serve the church in any way in which the witness of the spoken word inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective churchmanship, including the interpretation or explanation of the Scriptures, doctrine, organization, and life of the Church.
3. Through continued study and training, a lay speaker should prepare to undertake one or more of the following functions, giving primary attention to service within the local church.
  - a) To take initiative in giving assistance and support to the program emphases of the Church and to assist in giving vital leadership to the total work of the Church.
  - b) To assist in the conduct of worship services and to lead meetings for prayer, study, and discussion when requested by the pastor.
  - c) To conduct services of worship, present sermons and addresses, and lead meetings for study and training in settings other than those in the local church in which the lay speaker holds membership, when recommended or requested by a pastor or district superintendent.

## THE ROOTS OF LAY SPEAKING

Lay speaking has its roots in the very beginnings of United Methodism and the predecessor bodies that make up our denomination today. Lay persons have served as preachers since the time of the Wesleys. Tradition holds that the leader of the prayer meeting at which John Wesley had his conversion experience was William Holland, a house painter, who was a member of the Moravian Brethren. Charles Wesley's conversion experience had occurred three or four days earlier at a prayer meeting that included two lay

persons, William Bray and William Holland, and Wesley.

Methodist classes or fellowships did not spread rapidly until John Wesley, at his mother's urging, accepted lay persons as worship leaders. One of the first persons to serve was Tom Maxfield. As a priest of the Church of England, John Wesley was disturbed by the fact that men such as Tom Maxfield were preaching and "saving souls" by their preaching.

In the American colonies, Methodism owes its

foundation to the work of lay persons. Captain Webb, Barbara Heck, and Robert Strawbridge were lay persons. Many of the circuit riders of the early years of American Methodism were unordained lay persons.

"Lay speaking or preaching" is listed as one of the aspects of a program of lay activities in the legislation for the General Board of Lay Activities of The Methodist Church beginning in 1939. As early as 1930 a similar reference appears in the *Discipline* of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

The 1960 *Discipline of The Methodist Church* included for the first time a paragraph elaborating on the responsibility of the General Board of Lay Activities for lay speaking.

*Lay speaking*.—The board shall supervise the program of lay speaking, which shall include training courses and other materials for lay speakers, and other means to encourage the development of an adequate number of qualified lay speakers, to the end that there may be no silent pulpits in Methodist churches. (¶ 1493.7)

"No silent pulpits in Methodist churches"! Now there's a theme that has caught the imagination of many lay and clergy persons. As a church of small membership congregations (even today more than 65 percent of our United Methodist congregations have less than two hundred members!), Methodism early developed the multiple-point circuit. Ordained preachers were assigned to serve circuits of three—five—ten—even twenty or more preaching points. In order that there might be "no silent pulpits," lay persons were trained and designated as lay speakers and then assigned to fill these pulpits on the

Sundays when the preacher could not be present. Of such is probably the beginning of lay speaking.

Even today the same theme is used in several of our Annual Conferences as one of the rallying points for the lay speaker program. Especially during the Lenten season, an effort is made to insure that every congregation that so desires has the opportunity of a service every Sunday led by a lay speaker or an ordained pastor.

### *Lay Speaking Today*

As our church and our communities have changed, lay speaking has become much wider in its service opportunities. Lay speakers today are persons who utilize their skills in spoken communication in campgrounds, nursing homes, retirement homes, jails, and other places where people are gathered who cannot get to a place of worship for Sunday services.

Many lay speakers find their primary opportunities for service in the local church in which they hold membership. They utilize their skills and training as liturgists in the Sunday services, as leaders of prayer and Bible study groups, as church school teachers, as lay leaders and office holders, as parish visitors, as worship leaders for classes and organizations, and in a multitude of other ways.

After long years of primary service as pulpit supplies, lay speakers are finding increasing and ever-widening opportunities to serve in church and community. But always, the service is in ways calling for the utilization of the spoken witness and communication to inspire persons "to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective churchmanship."

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR LAY SPEAKING?

Lay speaking has been traditionally a program of the group responsible for lay activities—in recent years a conference or district Board of the Laity, committee or division of Lay Life and Work.

New organizational plans for Annual Conferences and districts have brought new alignments of responsibility. These plans differ among the Annual Conferences. The 1976 General Conference decided not to specify in the *Discipline* the specific organizational unit that should have responsibility for lay speaking but to leave this a matter to be determined in the Annual Conference and the district.

The *Discipline* sets standards for certification and required training. It refers to these being administered by "the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking (or other responsible group as the district or conference may determine)" (¶ 271.1).

At the general church level, responsibility for the support of the lay speaker program is assigned to the

Division of Lay Life and Work of the General Board of Discipleship.

The 1976 *Discipline* does not specify organizational structure for discipleship at the conference and district levels, but it does specify discipleship functions. In the area of lay life and work, one of these functions is lay speaking. Every Annual Conference and district is expected to make provisions for this function in a way appropriate to its organizational plans.

Traditionally lay speaking has been a district and local church program; Annual Conference and general units of the church have provided support services to districts in the development and resourcing of the program. Certification of lay speakers, training of lay speakers, and coordination of the activities of lay speakers beyond the local church have all been carried out at the district level.

Some Annual Conferences are now providing for

the certification of lay speakers at the conference level and are providing conference planning and direction for training programs. In some conferences and districts, the district Council on Ministries has assumed active leadership of the lay speaking program. In other conferences and districts, the Board of Discipleship has assumed this responsibility and carries it out through a Committee on Lay Speaking related to its Division of Lay Life and Work. In at least one Annual Conference, United Methodist Men provide the training program and enrichment opportunities for lay speakers in cooperation with district committees on lay speaking.

## ORGANIZING FOR LAY SPEAKING

An organizational structure is needed to provide for certification, training, and coordination of activities of lay speakers beyond the local church.

Here is one possible approach to organization at the district and conference levels:

### *District Committee on Lay Speaking*

Appointed by and responsible to: (one of the following)

District Council on Ministries

District Board of Discipleship

District Committee on Lay Life and Work

District Board of the Laity

#### Membership:

District director of lay speaking (chairperson)

District superintendent

Other persons, lay or clergy, elected

because of interest and involvement with the lay speaker program

#### Responsibilities:

Certifying and renewing certification of lay speakers

Providing training programs for lay speakers (basic and advanced)

Maintaining a list of certified lay speakers

Planning for and supporting the activities of lay speakers beyond the local church

#### Relationships:

District director of lay speaking is a member of the group to which the committee is responsible and also a member of the district Council on Ministries

### *Conference Committee on Lay Speaking*

Appointed by and responsible to: (one of the following)

Conference Council on Ministries

Conference Board of Discipleship

Conference Committee on Lay Life and Work

Conference Board of Laity

#### Membership:

Conference director of lay speaking (chairperson)

Who is responsible in your district? In your conference?

This is a matter *you must decide*—you who are district superintendents, chairpersons of discipleship, members of conference and district Councils on Ministries, and, ultimately, all you who are members of Annual Conferences.

What are some organizational options? Read on—the next section offers an approach to organization. It may not be one that fits your needs, but you can modify it to serve your requirements; it will provide ideas that you can build on to develop your own organizational plan.

## ORGANIZING FOR LAY SPEAKING

District directors of lay speaking

At least one district superintendent

Other persons as appointing group may determine

#### Responsibilities:

Coordination of lay speaking across districts

Recommendation to Annual Conference of conference-wide policies and procedures for lay speaking

Training of district directors and the committees on lay speaking

Training and certification of persons to lead training programs for lay speakers

#### Relationships:

Conference director of lay speaking is a member of the group to which the committee is responsible

### *The Director of Lay Speaking*

The director of lay speaking is a key person in any organizational plan for lay speaking. As chairperson of the district Committee on Lay Speaking, the *district director* will preside over its meetings, represent the committee in its parent body, and work closely with the district superintendent in the planning, coordinating, and implementing of the district program of lay speaking.

Frequently it is the district director of lay speaking who receives requests and makes assignment of lay speakers for engagements beyond the local church. It is also the director who manages the process through which persons apply for and receive certification and renewal of certification as lay speakers. The director carries on the necessary correspondence, receives reports, and arranges for meetings of the committee to act on matters of certification.

Since training for lay speakers is also a responsibility of the district committee, the district director will frequently serve as the chairperson of a committee

planning for specific training events and on occasion may serve as the leader of training events.

The *conference director* of lay speaking serves as chairperson of a conference Committee on Lay Speaking, if such is organized, and represents the lay speaking program in the group to which the committee is responsible. The conference director will help coordinate the program of lay speaking among the districts of the conference and serve in supportive roles in relationship to the district directors.

Communications between conference and district committees and leaders concerned about lay speaking and the General Board of Discipleship are carried out

principally through the conference director of lay speaking. The director will periodically receive mailings with information about resources, training programs, and other activities related to lay speaking. The director also will convey to the General Board the needs and concerns of the conference and districts. Occasionally, the conference director will have an opportunity to participate in workshops or training programs on the regional or national level that will help the director gain new insights and become equipped to lead the lay speaker program of the conference more effectively.

## CERTIFICATION OF LAY SPEAKERS

Persons can be certified as lay speakers by a Committee on Lay Speaking once they have met the requirements of paragraph 271 in the *Discipline*. This paragraph provides that certification may be granted by the committee *after* the candidate has:

1. Completed a training course.
2. Made application in writing (a suggested form is included in the Appendix of this handbook).
3. Been recommended by the pastor and Administrative Board or Charge Conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership.
4. Appeared before the committee.

This process is intended to insure that persons certified as lay speakers have considered the responsibilities of the office, have developed their skills, have participated in a training program, have obtained the endorsement of their peers in the local church and their pastor, and have met the committee.

The certification of persons as lay speakers is subject to annual renewal; this renewal may be granted by the Committee on Lay Speaking *after* the lay speaker has:

1. Requested the renewal in writing.
2. Submitted an annual report.
3. Been recommended by the pastor and Administrative Board or Charge Conference.

4. Completed an advanced course for lay speakers at least once in every three years.

Renewal of certification by the Committee on Lay Speaking was first required in 1976. Previously, lay speaker certification was renewed by the Charge Conference. The purpose of this legislation is to provide that the same group that grants the original certification assumes responsibility for renewal. The requirement of participation in a training program at least once in every three years is intended to insure that lay speakers continue to develop their skills and periodically to renew their understanding of lay speaking.

The overall effect of the 1976 legislation is to strengthen the lay speaker program by setting forth more clearly the expectations and the standards for the office and by requiring that persons participate in training programs for original certification and for renewal of certification. The concern is to lift the image and standing of the office of lay speaker by assuring seriousness of intent and possession of skills. Thus, when persons are invited to serve as lay speakers beyond their local churches, it can be expected that they will have the skills and abilities needed to perform the service for which they have been certified.

## TRAINING FOR LAY SPEAKERS

Training programs for lay speakers help them grow in their understanding of the Christian faith—of the life and heritage of their church—and develop skills in spoken communication that they may be equipped for more effective service.

Most frequently, training programs are offered at the district or subdistrict level. District directors of lay speaking often serve as the coordinators or chairpersons of the planning group for lay speaker training. We suggest that planning for training be one of the

responsibilities of the district Committee on Lay Speaking and that the committee recruit leaders or leadership teams as needed to carry out the training events.

Since training is now a prerequisite for both original certification and the renewal of certification, it will be necessary for most districts to offer basic and advanced courses for lay speakers on a yearly basis.

Resources to support training programs are prepared by the General Board of Discipleship and made

available through Cokesbury. These resources include a basic course and leader's guides for advanced courses.

### *The Basic Course*

Objectives for the basic course include:

1. Developing an understanding of the roles, relationships, service opportunities, and procedures for certification and renewal of certification of lay speakers.
2. Developing communication skills through an increased understanding of the principles of communication and through practice in the application of these principles in activities related to the responsibilities of lay speakers.
3. Clarifying and developing understandings of the Christian faith, the Bible, worship, and the heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church.
4. Developing skill in utilizing the resources of the Christian faith, the Bible, worship, and the heritage and traditions of The United Methodist Church in the performance of activities as lay speakers.

Resources for the basic course include a participant's resource book and a leader's guide. The course is designed for ten hours of class activity in a series of five two-hour sessions. It is adaptable to other schedules such as three three-hour sessions or a weekend retreat.

### *Advanced Courses*

Advanced course resources are leader's guides using paperback books as texts.

<i>First Year</i>	<i>Second Year</i>	<i>Third Year</i>
Basic Course	Basic Course	Basic Course
Advanced Courses	Advanced Courses	Advanced Courses
1. Effective Communication through Public Speaking	1. Understanding and Leading Public Worship	1. Effective Communication through Public Speaking
2. Understanding and Using the Bible	2. Basic Christian Beliefs	2. Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions

The *Discipline* provides that advanced courses shall be either those recommended by the Board of Discipleship or alternates approved by the Committee on Lay Speaking. The selection of the specific areas to be covered in the advanced courses that you offer should reflect both your understanding of the competencies needed by lay speakers and the interests of the lay speakers on your district.

The areas chosen for the first series developed by the Board of Discipleship were among those content areas most frequently suggested as having a high

The first series of leader's guides include the following courses:

**Understanding and Using the Bible**

**Effective Communication through Public Speaking**

**Understanding and Leading Public Worship**

**Basic Christian Beliefs**

**Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions**

Many resources available for adult study programs can be adapted for use as advanced courses for lay speakers. Training programs for lay speakers should emphasize the development of skills in spoken communication as well as the development of understandings and the gaining of new information. It is this emphasis on communication skills that you will frequently need to add to existing study resources.

An excellent listing of resources will be found in *Adult Planbook*, the yearly listing of United Methodist resources for adult education from The United Methodist Publishing House and the Curriculum Resources Committee of the General Board of Discipleship. Series such as *Christian Faith in Life*, *Our Living Bible*, *Our Living Faith*, or the various elective studies are all adaptable for lay speaker training programs.

### *A Training Program*

In order to provide both variety in offerings and opportunity for development of skills and understandings in the areas basic to lay speaking, your committee will find it helpful to develop an ongoing plan for your training program.

A possible three-year plan might look something like this:

priority for lay speaker training by respondents in a nationwide study of lay speaking conducted in 1974-75.

To gather data from lay speakers on your district about their preferences you might use two approaches. First, persons completing the basic course could be asked to indicate areas in which they would like to have further training. Second, a mail survey or phone survey could be conducted of the lay speakers of the district to identify their areas of interest.

As you develop your training program you will want

to be in close touch with your district Council on Ministries and other groups developing training programs for lay persons. In this way you can coordinate your efforts, and the training of lay speakers can be an integral part of the total lay training effort of the district. Some districts are incorporating lay speaker training into Christian Worker Schools or other district leadership schools.

### *Scheduling Courses*

What is the best schedule for a lay speaker training program? Let's list some of the alternatives:

- One night a week for five weeks
- Five successive nights in one week
- A weekend, Friday night through Sunday noon
- Sunday afternoon and evening for three successive weeks
- Saturday mornings, once a month for three months

You can think of other alternatives. The best plan is one that fits the needs of your participants and the requirements of your training program. In lay speaker training, one important consideration is the provision of time between sessions for preparation. If persons are to develop their skills in the preparation of speeches, sermons, prayers, worship services, and discussions, they need time to prepare for the class session. This means that a weekend retreat is usually not the best choice, especially for a basic course.

Some districts offer the basic course on a series of evenings or Sundays and then plan advanced courses for weekends. One conference offers basic courses on the district level and advanced courses at the conference level.

In any program, a combination of basic and advanced courses is usually helpful. In this way prospective lay speakers and lay speakers seeking advanced training can be participants in the same program. This provides for car pooling, increased fellowship, and more enthusiasm for the program.

### *Leaders for Training Events*

Who will lead your training program? Where will you find the necessary leaders? How many leaders will you need?

For most courses, we suggest a leadership team of two or three persons. Courses can be led by a single leader, but there are many advantages to a leadership team.

Leaders should be persons with experience in the lay speaker program and with skills in the planning and leadership of learning experiences with adults.

Such persons may be found among the clergy on your district. Many will be found on the faculties of the high schools, colleges, and universities of your area. You will usually find faculty members of United Methodist-related institutions especially willing to help you with your training program. Persons who have received training as laboratory and workshop leaders with teachers of adults in the church school are also good leadership prospects. Your conference Committee on Lay Speaking may have a list of persons who have taught lay speaker courses or who have been certified through the leadership education program of the conference.

After you have selected your leaders, meet with them to discuss the training program and share the objectives for the particular course they are to lead. You will also want to help them obtain resources, prepare the physical facilities, and plan for advance information to be sent to the participants. Leaders need the continued support of your planning committee as they carry out their responsibilities.

### *Training Leaders*

Training leaders is a responsibility of your Committee on Lay Speaking—especially if you are a conference committee.

One training approach is to offer a coaching conference or preparation workshop. This is a conference in which persons are helped to prepare leadership plans for a training event for lay speakers. Content in a coaching conference will include: understanding adults as learners, methods and activities in adult education, understanding lay speaking, content areas for lay speaker training, building a leadership plan, and leading a group.

The Division of Lay Life and Work of the General Board of Discipleship is prepared to help you with the design and leadership of a coaching conference at the Annual Conference level.

### *Other Training Opportunities*

In addition to the training events that you plan and sponsor, lay speaker training may also be offered by local churches, cooperative parishes, or clusters of churches in your district. If you have approved them, courses offered by other groups can be recognized as meeting the training requirement for certification. For this reason, you should establish through your district Council on Ministries a procedure for helping groups in the planning of training programs and for requesting recognition of their courses.

# SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAY SPEAKERS

Lay speaking began with a strong emphasis upon preaching and pulpit supply. In recent years, however, the service opportunities for lay speakers have broadened considerably. Training programs should help lay speakers discover the opportunities for service available in their local churches and communities as well as those beyond the local church in the district and the conference.

What are some of these service opportunities?

Some of the opportunities identified in a national survey of lay speaking in 1974-75 included:

- Pulpit supply
- Worship leadership in the home congregation
- Teaching or leading church school classes
- Speaking at meetings of church organizations
- Worship leader in nursing and retirement homes
- Worship leader at campgrounds
- Speaker at community organizations such as Rotary, Lions, and other service clubs
- Worship leader at jails and penal institutions
- Leader of Bible study and prayer groups
- Lay Witness Missions
- Devotional leader in church groups
- Support of conference and district programs
- Benevolence interpretation

A survey of your district or conference will produce additional service opportunities that you can add to this list.

What is the responsibility of district or conference committees? Committees on Lay Speaking frequently take the lead in opening up beyond the local church service opportunities and coordinating the participation of lay speakers in these activities. A district committee may be responsible for assigning persons to lead worship in specific nursing or retirement homes on a regular basis. It may provide worship leaders for churches on multiple-point circuits; it may recruit lay speakers for worship leaders in jails, campgrounds, or other institutional settings on the district.

In some districts, lay speakers have been part of teams that have visited local churches to interpret the benevolence program of our denomination and the Annual Conference in a program initiated by the district Council on Ministries.

In other districts, lay speakers have been recruited and trained for leadership in cooperative parish ministries, serving in the parish of which their church is a member.

Your committee will want to be actively involved in developing opportunities for service, while at the same time helping local churches discover that the lay speakers in their congregation are a rich source of leadership and helping lay speakers see that their first area of service will be in their local churches of membership.

## RESOURCES FOR THE LAY SPEAKING PROGRAM

Resources to support the lay speaker program are prepared by the Division of Lay Life and Work of the General Board of Discipleship, published by The United Methodist Publishing House, and distributed through the Cokesbury Regional Service Centers. For a complete list of these resources, see your current *Cokesbury Church and Church School Supplies Catalog*. Included in the basic resources for the lay speaking program are the following items:

### *Basic Course for Lay Speaker Training*

#### *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*

A reading and study book for lay speakers and prospective lay speakers designed for use in the basic training course. It provides an introduction to lay speaking and assists the user in the development of the understandings and skills needed by lay speakers. United Methodist Publishing House, 1977. \$2.25.

#### *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Leader's Guide*

Guidance for persons responsible for planning and leading basic training programs for lay

speakers and prospective lay speakers. It includes suggested learning objectives, methods and activities for training sessions. United Methodist Publishing House, 1977. \$1.25.

#### *Advanced Courses for Lay Speakers*

#### *Advanced Courses for Lay Speakers*

Basic guidance for the planning of advanced courses for lay speaker training. United Methodist Publishing House, 1977. \$2.25. It includes a section on planning and administering advanced courses and detailed guidance for courses in five different areas. Topics for courses and related textbooks suggested for class use include:

1. Effective Communication Through Public Speaking

Text: Sleeth, Ronald E. *Look Who's Talking! A Guide for Lay Speakers in the Church*. Abingdon, 1977. \$3.95.

2. Understanding and Using the Bible

Text: Barclay, William. *Introducing the Bible*. Abingdon, 1972. \$1.45.

3. Understanding and Leading Worship  
Text: *Word and Table: A Basic Pattern of Sunday Worship for United Methodists*. Abingdon, 1976. \$2.50.

4. Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions

Text: Armstrong, James. *United Methodist Primer*. Discipleship Resources, 1976. \$1.50 each; ten or more \$1.25 each.

5. Basic Christian Beliefs

Text: Colaw, Emerson. *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian*. Tidings, 1972. \$2.25 each; ten or more \$1.75 each.

### Certificates

#### Lay Speaker Credential Card

A wallet-sized card to acknowledge the certification of a lay speaker, with space for a record of the annual renewal. Ten cents each; \$8.00 for one hundred.

#### Lay Speaker's Certificate

A certificate designed for framing that acknowledges certification and includes space for the record of annual renewal. Ten cents each; \$8.50 for one hundred.

#### Certified Lay Speaker Pin

A lapel pin with the United Methodist cross and flame and the designation "Certified Lay Speaker." \$3.75 each.

#### Annual Report of Lay Speaker

A report form for an annual report to the Charge

Conference with a copy for the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking. It includes a form to request renewal of certification and space for the recommendation of the Charge Conference. Included in the Charge Conference Packet (see Cokesbury catalog).

Cokesbury Regional Service Centers from which resources and catalogs may be ordered:

1910 Main Street, Dallas, Texas 75221

1600 Queen Anne Road, Teaneck, New Jersey 07666

Fifth and Grace Streets, Richmond, Virginia 23261  
201 Eighth Avenue, South, Nashville, Tennessee 37202

1661 North Northwest Highway, Park Ridge, Illinois 60068

85 McAllister Street, San Francisco, California 94102

Write to Discipleship Resources, Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202 for their current catalog, which contains books, study resources, and leader helps for the local church in the areas of education, evangelism, worship, stewardship, and leadership development.

For information on supplemental resources and assistance in developing your program, contact:

Section on Leadership Development and Training  
Division of Lay Life and Work  
Board of Discipleship  
Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202

## APPENDIX

### Lay Speaking in the 1976 *Book of Discipline*

#### Section IX. Lay Speaking.

##### ¶270.

1. A *lay speaker* is a member of a local church who is well informed on the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church and who has received specific training to develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication.
2. Lay speakers are to serve the church in any way in which the witness of the spoken word inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective churchmanship, including the interpretation or explanation of the Scriptures, doctrine, organization, and life of the Church.
3. Through continued study and training, a lay speaker should prepare to undertake one or more of the following functions, giving primary attention to service within the local church.
  - a) To take initiative in giving assistance and support to the program emphases of the Church and to assist in

giving vital leadership to the total work of the Church.

- b) To assist in the conduct of worship services and to lead meetings for prayer, study, and discussion when requested by the pastor.
- c) To conduct services of worship, present sermons and addresses, and lead meetings for study and training in settings other than those in the local church in which the lay speaker holds membership, when recommended or requested by a pastor or district superintendent.

##### ¶ 271. *Certification of Lay Speakers.*

1. A candidate may be certified as a lay speaker by the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking (or other responsible group as the district or conference may determine) after the candidate has:
  - a. Completed a training course for lay speakers, which may be one recommended by the Board of Discipleship or an alternate approved by the appropriate committee.
  - b. Made application in writing to the appropriate committee and has been recommended by the pastor

and the Administrative Board or the Charge Conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership.

- c. Appeared before the appropriate committee for a review of his or her application and a consideration of the responsibilities of a lay speaker.
2. It is recommended that a consecration service be held in the district for persons certified as lay speakers.

**¶ 272. *Renewal of Certification of Lay Speakers.***

1. The certification of a lay speaker may be renewed annually by the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking (or other responsible group as the district or

conference may determine), after the lay speaker has:

- a. Requested in writing the renewal of certification.
- b. Submitted an annual report to his or her Charge Conference and the appropriate committee, giving evidence of the satisfactory performance of activities related to the office of lay speaker.
- c. Been recommended by the pastor and the Administrative Board or Charge Conference.
- d. Completed at least once in every three years an advanced course for lay speakers, which may be one recommended by the Board of Discipleship or an alternate approved by the appropriate committee on lay speaking.

# Annual Report of the Lay Speaker

This report is for use by the Lay Speaker in reporting to the Charge Conference (¶ 272.b). Numbers in parentheses refer to paragraphs in the 1976 *Book of Discipline*.

Church	Charge
District	Conference

For the period beginning \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_, and ending \_\_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_\_

1. Have you previously been certified by the district or Conference Committee on Lay Speaking on recommendation of your Administrative Board or Charge Conference (¶¶ 271-72)? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you completed a basic training course for lay speakers as offered by your district or conference? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you completed an advanced course for lay speakers during this past year? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, title(s) of course(s) completed: \_\_\_\_\_

4. In what activities have you engaged and/or what books or other resources have you read or used during the past year to help you:

(a) To develop your devotional life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(b) To improve your understanding of the Bible and the Christian faith? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(c) To improve your understanding of The United Methodist Church? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(d) To improve your skills as a lay speaker? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Indicate your participation as a lay speaker in the following activities in your local church during the last year:

(a) Number of worship services \_\_\_\_\_; In what ways did you participate? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(b) Number of other talks or devotional messages given: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Classes taught: \_\_\_\_\_ Discussions led: \_\_\_\_\_

(d) Number of visitation calls made in behalf of your church \_\_\_\_\_

(e) Institutional or community activities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(f) Other activities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Indicate the ways you have served as a lay speaker beyond your local church this past year:

(a) Number of times as a pulpit supply: \_\_\_\_\_

(b) Number of times as a speaker at groups or organizations: \_\_\_\_\_

(c) List other activities and their frequency: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you believe that you have had adequate opportunity for service as a lay speaker this past year? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_ If no, indicate the areas of service in which you prefer to serve: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Give any recommendations you have for improving the lay-speaking program in this district or conference:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ 19 \_\_\_\_\_

~~~~~  
I request the recommendation of the Charge Conference (or Administrative Board) for the renewal of my certification as a lay speaker for the ensuing year.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Lay Speaker

Church

Date \_\_\_\_\_ 19 \_\_\_\_\_

#### CHARGE CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATION

The Charge Conference (or Administrative Board) of the \_\_\_\_\_  
Charge (or Church) recommends the above person to the District (or Conference) Committee on Lay Speaking for renewal of certification for the year \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
District Superintendent (or Pastor)

Date \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_\_

Prepared and edited by the General Council on Finance and Administration  
and authorized as the official form  
for this purpose. 1977-80. Printed in U.S.A.

Application for Certification or Renewal of Certification  
as a Lay Speaker in The United Methodist Church

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Member of \_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church in \_\_\_\_\_

If this is an application for original certification, please describe briefly your Christian and church experience on a separate page.

I desire to be certified (have my certification renewed) as a lay speaker in The United Methodist Church. I have read the statement in the *Book of Discipline* about the office of lay speaker (¶ 270-72), have completed the necessary training, and obtained the needed recommendations as indicated below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Record of Training:*

*Basic Course:*

|             |            |      |
|-------------|------------|------|
| Where taken | Instructor | Date |
|-------------|------------|------|

*Advanced Courses:*

|     |                |                     |               |
|-----|----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| (1) | _____<br>Title | _____<br>Instructor | _____<br>Date |
|-----|----------------|---------------------|---------------|

|             |            |      |
|-------------|------------|------|
| Where taken | Instructor | Date |
|-------------|------------|------|

|     |                |                     |               |
|-----|----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| (2) | _____<br>Title | _____<br>Instructor | _____<br>Date |
|-----|----------------|---------------------|---------------|

|             |            |      |
|-------------|------------|------|
| Where taken | Instructor | Date |
|-------------|------------|------|

*Recommendations:*

*Pastor:*

*Administrative Board or  
Charge Conference:*

|                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Date of Recommendation | Date of Recommendation |
|------------------------|------------------------|

|                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Signature of Pastor | Signature of Secretary |
|---------------------|------------------------|

Send a completed copy of this application to your district or conference Committee Lay Speaking. Contact your district superintendent for address.

# **HANDBOOK**

# **LAY SPEAKING**

# **IN THE UNITED**

# **METHODIST**

# **CHURCH**

**Prepared by**  
**Richard S. Smith, Staff,**  
**Division of Lay Life and Work,**  
**Board of Discipleship,**  
**The United Methodist Church**

*Lay Speaking in the United Methodist Church* is a basic handbook containing guidance for conference and district leaders and others responsible for organizing and administering lay speaking programs. It includes suggestions on organizational structure for lay speaking at the conference and district levels, information on standards and procedures for the certification of lay speakers, and a complete listing of resources for use in the lay speaker program.

This handbook will be especially helpful to conference and district directors of lay speaking, district superintendents, and conference and district Committees on Lay Speaking.

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90¢

The United Methodist Publishing House

# INTRODUCTION TO LAY SPEAKING

## RESOURCE BOOK



## ABOUT THIS BOOK

*Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book* is a basic resource for reading and study by lay speakers and prospective lay speakers. A companion book, *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Leader's Guide*, contains suggestions for persons planning and leading a basic training course for lay speakers. This book is the suggested participant's study book for this course. These resources have been planned by a team composed of Richard W. Harrington; Joseph H. Kite, Jr.; Harry W. Robie; and Richard S. Smith.

Resources for the lay speaking program are prepared and edited by the Division of Lay Life and Work, Board of Discipleship, published by The United Methodist Publishing House, and distributed by Cokesbury. See the back pages of this book for a complete list of basic resources.

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Richard S. Smith is a member of the staff of the Division of Lay Life and Work, Board of Discipleship. He has been responsible for the planning and editing of the new lay speaker resources released in 1977.

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# INTRODUCTION TO LAY SPEAKING: RESOURCE BOOK

## CONTENTS

|                                                                                  |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Introduction.....                                                             | 4  |
| 2. Lay Speaking in the 1976 <i>Book of Discipline</i> ...                        | 4  |
| 3. You and Lay Speaking—Joseph H. Kite Jr....                                    | 5  |
| 4. Our United Methodist Heritage and<br>Traditions—James Armstrong.....          | 8  |
| 5. The Art of Communication<br>—Harry W. Robie.....                              | 13 |
| 6. Expressing Your Faith<br>—Richard W. Harrington.....                          | 21 |
| 7. Using and Interpreting the Bible<br>—Richard W. Harrington.....               | 26 |
| 8. Understanding and Planning Public<br>Worship—Richard S. Smith.....            | 32 |
| 9. Reaching Out: Service Opportunities for<br>Lay Speakers—Richard S. Smith..... | 36 |
| 10. Resources for the Lay Speaking Program.....                                  | 38 |

# INTRODUCTION

Lay speakers in the United Methodist Church are persons who recognize the importance of a ministry of witness through the spoken word. They agree to "serve the church in any way in which the witness of the spoken word inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective churchmanship."

The *Discipline* requires that lay speakers be "well informed on the Scriptures, and the doctrine, heritage, organization and life of the United Methodist Church" and "develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication" (¶ 270.1).

*Introduction to Lay Speaking* is a basic course of study to help persons prepare themselves for service as lay

speakers. The chapters of this resource book are developed around topics suggested by many lay speakers and trainers of lay speakers as essential content areas for a basic course. While this book is intended for use by a group following the suggestions to be found in the Leader's Guide, it is also valuable as a resource for personal reading and study. The course and this book are planned to help you become better informed on the Scriptures and the life of The United Methodist Church, and on the roles of lay speakers. They are also planned to help you develop skill in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication.

## LAY SPEAKING IN THE 1976 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

### Chapter Two, Section IX. Lay Speaking

#### ¶ 270.

1. A *lay speaker* is a member of a local church who is well informed on the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church and who has received specific training to develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication.
2. Lay speakers are to serve the church, in any way in which the witness of the spoken word inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective churchmanship, including the interpretation or explanation of the Scriptures, doctrine, organization, and life of the Church.
3. Through continued study and training, a lay speaker should prepare to undertake one or more of the following functions, giving primary attention to service within the local church.
  - a) To take initiative in giving assistance and support to the program emphases of the Church and to assist in giving vital leadership to the total work of the Church.
  - b) To assist in the conduct of worship services and to lead meetings for prayer, study, and discussion when requested by the pastor.
  - c) To conduct services of worship, present sermons and addresses, and lead meetings for study and training in settings other than those in the local church in which the lay speaker holds membership, when recommended or requested by a pastor or district superintendent.

#### ¶ 271. Certification of Lay Speakers.

1. A candidate may be certified as a lay speaker by the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking (or

other responsible group as the district or conference may determine) after the candidate has:

- a. Completed a training course for lay speakers, which may be one recommended by the Board of Discipleship or an alternate approved by the appropriate committee.
- b. Made application in writing to the appropriate committee and has been recommended by the pastor and the Administrative Board or the Charge Conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership.
- c. Appeared before the appropriate committee for a review of his or her application and a consideration of responsibilities of a lay speaker.

2. It is recommended that a consecration service be held in the district for persons certified as lay speakers.

#### ¶ 272. Renewal of Certification of Lay Speakers.

1. The certification of a lay speaker may be renewed annually by the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking (or other responsible group as the district or conference may determine), after the lay speaker has:
  - a. Requested in writing the renewal of certification.
  - b. Submitted an annual report to his or her Charge Conference and the appropriate committee, giving evidence of the satisfactory performance of activities related to the office of lay speaker.
  - c. Been recommended by the pastor and the Administrative Board or Charge Conference.
  - d. Completed at least once in every three years an advanced course for lay speakers, which may be one recommended by the Board of Discipleship or an alternate approved by the appropriate committee.

# YOU AND LAY SPEAKING

## Lay Speaking—a Challenge and a Call

Joseph H. Kite, Jr.

### A Challenge

We are constantly challenged to develop and use the talents God has given us. Christ told his followers the parable of the talents. As we retell the story in today's setting, we are still aware that there are more one-talent and two-talent persons than those with five talents. The one-talent person is tempted to say: 'With my poor abilities, nothing will be expected of me. What can I do?' But in the parable the real reason for the failure of the man with one talent was his fear: "I was afraid" (Matthew 25:25).

The parable of the talents tells us that a person must take some risk to venture for Christ. We must not be content with things as they are. We must break new ground. Christ requires of his followers the hazard of the untried road.

"Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (I Corinthians 9:16)

"The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary." (Isaiah 50:4)

"So the tongue is a little member and boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!" (James 3:5)

"The tongue is a little member, but it can inspire a nation to heroic action. . . . Words of comfort can rescue a soul from despair; bold words can strike powerful blows for justice; inspired words can start feet marching toward the goal of human brotherhood. Someone has said, "A word spoken at a solemn moment may be a mightier force for good or ill than any bodily act whatever."<sup>1</sup>

It is so easy to underestimate the potential power of one word spoken at the critical moment. Sometimes we say to ourselves that because we are not famous or learned or rich or powerful or gifted, our word means nothing in the presence of a great injustice or a great iniquity. Who would pay attention to us? Many good causes are hindered, often nameless persons are brought to untimely ends, because "those whom it behooves to speak remain silent." And because they do not speak, we do not speak. It is not always true that silence is golden; sometimes silence is cowardice.

It is important to remember that there is no limit to the power of any single life or any single voice when it is the only outlet, the only channel for righteousness in

a fateful situation. The silence of the high and mighty sometimes gives greater power to the simple voice of the solitary individual.

### A Call

All Christians share the same calling. When Paul wrote to a group of churches "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Ephesians 4:1), he was addressing not the office-bearers in the churches but every member, corporately and singly. You are called so that God's love, mercy, justice, and joy may permeate and change industry, politics, family and community life, as well as individual men and women. You are a minister. You are called, freed, sent, empowered by the Holy Spirit, loved, living under the Lordship of Christ, given gifts. What more can a person ask? The pertinent question is, How can I respond in gratitude?

Paul said to Archippus: "See that you fulfil the ministry which you have received in the Lord" (Colossians 4:17). Indeed, for present purposes, the Biblical message may be summarized by rephrasing Paul's words to Archippus: "You are a minister; therefore, fulfill your ministry."

In 1976 the General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a new section for the *Discipline* entitled "The Ministry of All Christians." It includes these paragraphs:

In Christ the love of God came into this world in a unique way. He came not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45) and to give his life in and for the world. Christ freely took the nature of a servant, carrying that servanthood to its utmost limits (Philippians 2:7). All Christian ministry is Christ's ministry of outreaching love. The Christian Church, as the Body of Christ, is that community whose members share both his mind and mission. The heart of Christian ministry is shown by a common life of gratitude and devotion, witness and service, celebration, and discipleship. All Christians are called to this ministry of servanthood in the world to the glory of God and for human fulfillment. The forms of this ministry are diverse in locale, in interest, and in denominational accent, yet also always catholic in spirit and outreach. ¶ 101)

The outreach of such ministries knows no limits. Beyond the diverse forms of ministry is this ultimate concern: that men and women may be renewed after the image of their creator (Colossians 3:10). *This means that all Christians are called to minister wherever Christ would have them serve and witness in deeds and words that heal and free.*

This general ministry of all Christians in Christ's name

<sup>1</sup> *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1957), Vol. 12:48.

and spirit is both a gift and a task. The gift is God's unmerited grace; the task is unstinting service. (¶ 104-105; italics added)

Your voice at a given place and at a given time may be the only one to be heard, the only one that may cause a change in direction, the only one that may give newness and meaning to life.

The lay speaking program continues to emphasize as one of its goals "no silent pulpits." But we may add to that "no speaking opportunity unfulfilled" and "no word for Christ unsaid." The challenge is in your daily work, in speaking to one or two others, in speaking in the home or hospital, in speaking in community life and social gatherings, in speaking in your church or in other United Methodist churches.

To train your mind and voice to work together for God takes practice and effort. It may be hard for you to do it by yourself, but you and God can do it together!

### The Purpose of the Lay Speaking Program

The purpose of the lay speaking program is to train men and women, youth and adults to be better speakers and leaders for Christ in the local United Methodist church and in their communities. Through lay speaking you can develop increased satisfaction in your ability to communicate the message of Christ to others.

The role of the Lay Speaker will vary in accordance with many factors such as the size of the church, location in rural or urban areas, the particular needs of the church and the community. To obtain a view of the different places and ways in which lay speakers may use their voice, refer to the section "Reaching Out: Service Opportunities for Lay Speakers." You will find some excellent examples of ways in which you may serve your church and your community by speaking the message of Christ.

### Why Be a Lay Speaker?

Although individual members do not have to be lay speakers to speak in United Methodist churches, there are several reasons for participating in the lay speaking program:

(1) To minister more effectively. Our voice is an important means of communicating things we know, feel, and have experienced. To do this effectively requires training, practice, and the development of self-confidence.

(2) To gain additional knowledge of the Bible, theology, the heritage of the Christian church, and the doctrines, organization and programs of The United Methodist Church. A variety of advanced courses is being developed by district and conference committees to aid lay speakers through a continuing educational program.

(3) To develop greater skill in communication and

to gain greater confidence in speaking by participating in practice sessions where individual performance is evaluated and constructive criticism is offered for improvement.

(4) To be in contact with the district or conference committee on lay speaking so that service opportunities may be known and you may be "on call" for opportunities and needs as they arise outside of your local church.

(5) To assist in the training of other lay speakers. It is hoped that persons who are already familiar with public speaking and communication techniques will enter the program so that they may assist in course instruction as well as serving as an inspiration for others.

### Who Is a Lay Speaker?

The *Discipline* (¶ 270-72) describes a lay speaker as a member of a local United Methodist church who has accomplished two things. First, he or she has become "well informed on the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church." A lay speaker should know from where we have come and where we are now both as Christians and as United Methodists. This we need to know before we can explain it to others. We should strive to speak accurately and intelligently. God has given us the mind and the voice, but we have to select the words.

Second, the *Discipline* states that a lay speaker must receive "specific training to develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication." Spoken communication means more than "public speaking." It also means the very important ability to communicate through the spoken word to another individual, to a small group, to a family, or others in a variety of settings.

"Lay Speakers are to serve the church in any way in which the witness of the spoken word inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ. . . ." This statement should serve as a challenge to seek, in the local church and beyond, ways in which the right word at the right time may heal, lift up, incite new interest, and lead persons to a deeper commitment to Christ.

The phrase "through continued study and training" says clearly that the lay speaker is to be involved in a continuing educational program to improve his or her knowledge, ability to communicate, and confidence in the ability to do the task.

"A lay speaker should prepare to undertake one or more of the following functions." It is not expected that each person will wish to develop, or be capable of developing, competence in all three areas or functions. These functions are steps requiring different degrees of training, knowledge, and ability. One may increase in ability with study and experience.

"Giving primary attention to service within the local

church." This statement sets a sense of priority for the lay speaker, saying that you should first give attention to the needs of your local church before searching for outside opportunities.

"To take initiative in giving assistance and support. . . ." It is the responsibility of the lay speaker to take some action, to look for needs, and to work with others to develop programs or accomplish specific goals. Do not wait by the phone. The call may not come there!

"Giving assistance and support to the program emphases of the Church and to assist in giving vital leadership to the total work of the Church." This is one place where the new lay speaker may begin effectively to use his or her voice in speaking for the programs and goals of the local church or for the total work of The United Methodist Church. As an example, one may participate in a laity day program or make a short presentation during a worship service to speak for a finance campaign or a new church program or special event. A lay speaker may serve as a greeter to visitors or visit in the homes of prospective members. He or she may also serve as a teacher in the church-school program.

"To assist in the conduct of worship services and to lead meetings for prayer, study, and discussion when requested by the pastor." A lay speaker may assist in the worship service by presenting the call to worship, a scripture reading, or a prayer. This responsibility requires that the lay speaker gain an understanding of the structure and objectives of the worship service and have experience in planning services for specific purposes. An advanced course will be helpful at this stage. To carry out this function, the lay speaker should also develop skills, including the "how to" of conducting meetings for prayer, study of the Bible or resource books, and for discussion.

"To conduct services of worship, present sermons and addresses, and lead meetings for study and training in settings other than those in the local church. . . ." This form of service requires more experience and training. The presentation of sermons will require experience in speaking coupled with a good knowledge and understanding of the Bible. The lay speaker should strive for greater competence so that he or she may be prepared to speak in other churches or at community functions.

#### Called to Speak—Called to Preparation—Called to Prayer

Certification as a lay speaker by The United Methodist Church includes both responsibility and accountability. When an individual accepts certification, he or she accepts a responsibility in all speaking activities to be as accurate as possible in all information presented, to give as faithful an interpretation of the Scriptures as possible, and to be loyal to and supportive of The United Methodist Church.

The act of certification duly binds us to prepare ourselves as well as possible. We have much to learn if we wish to instruct others. God has given us a mind and a voice, but do not expect him to put words in your mouth! This talent we must develop ourselves.

"For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). In Semitic thought, the heart symbolized the active intellect rather than, as it does to us, the seat of feeling and emotion. Thus if one is to speak to others the word that will enrich their lives, there must be something substantial in one's own thinking. The content of the mind must not be left to chance.

"Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have made firm the feeble knees" (Job 4:4). Words that strengthen and uphold and make firm must be spoken not with the lips only, but with the mind and the heart.

Jesus said, "I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:36).

Words have tremendous power for good or ill. Almost every chapter in the collection of Proverbs has something to say about the kinds of speech that get people into trouble and the kinds that are helpful. Words can hurt or heal those who hear them. Words can harm or help the person who speaks them.

The words we speak are ours. The choice of words and our delivery of those words will reflect our knowledge and preparation for the task of effective communication. Remember, your task is more than to speak. It is to communicate effectively, accurately, and to do so in the most convincing manner possible.

And pray. Before and after preparation and speaking, set aside some time for quiet reflection. Allow your mind and heart to be open. Ask for God's help and guidance that through you the message of Christ may be told well, accurately, and enthusiastically to others.

And finally, be enthusiastic in your speaking. When Jesus said "Follow me," it must have been done with enthusiasm and conviction.

# OUR UNITED METHODIST HERITAGE AND TRADITIONS

## The Rocks from Which We Have Been Hewn

James Armstrong

United Methodists often trace their origins back to the Wesleys or to Phillip Otterbein or to Francis Asbury or to Jacob Albright. This is a mistake. Methodism emerged from and is an expression of the "holy catholic church." It goes back beyond eighteenth-century England and sixteenth-century Germany, beyond Aquinas and Augustine and the Church Fathers, into the soil of the Hebrew world; to the experience of a God-obsessed people (Israel) and a unique man (Jesus the Christ).

### Biblical Foundations

*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* says, "In all matters of faith and morals, the authority of Holy Scripture stands supreme." John Wesley called himself "a man of one book" (the Bible) and provided interpretative guidelines for his followers in his *Notes Upon the New Testament* and his *Forty-Four Sermons*. He was equally at home in the old and new covenants, preaching the law to convict his hearers that they might better understand and receive the gracious resources of the gospel.

Philip Otterbein, founder of the United Brethren in Christ, was equally committed to the scriptures and urged his followers "to be careful to preach no other doctrine than what is plainly laid down in the Bible."

The Wesleyan movement offered no new truth to those who responded to its vitality. It simply rediscovered and reactivated the good news that "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (II Corinthians 5:19).

The chief cornerstone of The United Methodist Church is not a man named Wesley, but the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth. This the Bible teaches and the faithful United Methodist believes.

### The Holy Catholic Church

The Apostles' Creed is a part of the common treasury of all Christians. Sunday after Sunday United Methodists join hundreds of millions of others in confessing their faith in "the holy catholic church."

This profession of faith often raises questions. Do these words mean that we believe in the *Roman Catholic Church*? Not at all. They do mean that, beyond our own sectarian loyalties, we believe in the church universal. We do not belong to the Roman Church, but its traditions belong to us. We are parts of a fellowship that includes members of the Eastern

Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Pentecostal churches, and unnumbered persons of differing backgrounds who possess and reflect the spirit of Christ.

The United Methodist Church did not start in a vacuum. When John Wesley taught that the just shall live by faith, that persons are saved by grace through faith, he was echoing the firm convictions of Augustine, who redirected the course of the church in the fourth century, and of the reformer Martin Luther. *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis, as well as the devotional books of Jeremy Taylor and William Law, gave direction and content to Wesley's religious development.

The theology of the Reformation and the spiritual disciplines of Anglican and Roman Catholic mystics influenced the beginnings of the Wesleyan movement. So, too, did German pietism and the Anabaptist movement. The Moravians Peter Boehler and Count Zinzendorf exemplified a quality of life and a sense of assurance Wesley sought and eventually found. And the German pietistic revival in Pennsylvania influenced Philip Otterbein, Martin Boehm, and Jacob Albright, founders of the Evangelical United Brethren Church. So, when United Methodists say they believe in "the holy catholic church [and] the communion of the saints" they are really saying that they cherish and claim for themselves those truths borne by and exemplified through faithful Christians of all persuasions and denominations across the centuries.

### The Wesleyan Revival

It is true, however, that United Methodism is a direct descendant of the Wesleyan revival, a religious movement that gripped and transformed the life of eighteenth-century England. Lecky, the historian, argued that the Christian revolution started in England under the preaching of the Wesleys was "of greater historic importance than all the splendid victories by land and sea won under Pitt."<sup>1</sup> He went on to say that the Wesleyan revival gave Britain an equivalent of the French Revolution without the bloodbath.

John Wesley was born in Epworth, England, June 17, 1703. He died in London, March 2, 1791. At the time of his birth, England was wallowing in a mire of

<sup>1</sup>W. H. Fitchett, *Wesley and His Century* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1907), p. 10.

sensuality, materialism, and intellectual carelessness. When he died, the conscience of the nation had been quickened and the church had found new life. In 1791, his "societies" claimed more than 120,000 members with some 300 preachers.

Like Loyola, Wesley was a brilliant organizer. The word *Methodist* was first hurled at Wesley and a group of his friends at Oxford as a term of derision. They had formed a Holy Club. They met for prayer and study to deepen their spiritual lives. Their schedules seemed so rigid, their lives so systematized and methodical, that they were scornfully called "Methodists." Wesley proudly embraced the epithet. His remarkable capacity for organizing time, resources, and persons continued with him throughout his life. For more than fifty years he preached an average of three times a day. Traveling by horseback and carriage, he covered more than a quarter of a million miles. This man "of one book" wrote or edited nearly five hundred books, tracts, and pamphlets. During the early years of his ministry he set aside specific times to study Greek, Latin, and Hebrew as well as metaphysics, philosophy, poetry, and "divinity." Beyond this prodigious individual effort he organized his classes and societies, supervised his preachers, and directed the affairs of his "conferences."

But the Wesleyan movement can never be explained in terms of energy and organization alone. It was, above all else, a revival of the spiritual life of a people. Its main focus and contribution was *Christian experience*.

From the time he was "plucked [as a brand] from the burning" rectory in Epworth as a lad of five until he uttered his last words ("The best of all is God with us"), John Wesley was convinced he was set aside by God for some very special mission. Returning to England from an unsuccessful stint as a missionary among Indians in Georgia, he sought a sense of assurance he had never known. Peter Boehler and the Moravians had impressed him with their calm in the face of danger. On May 24, 1738, attending a prayer meeting at Aldersgate, he heard someone read Martin Luther's Preface to Romans. Later he wrote, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, and assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." John Wesley had been a priest in the Church of England for thirteen years. He and his fellow "Methodists" had been meeting, praying, studying, giving alms, visiting prisons, and seeking to "work out their own salvation" for more than ten years. Yet, in a very real sense, the Wesleyan revival was born at Aldersgate. Ever thereafter his methods would be flexible, his doctrines person-centered, and his fiery enthusiasm unquenchable.

John Wesley believed that any claims of Christian truth or approaches to Christian discipleship needed to be subject to a fourfold test: (1) What does the Bible

say? (2) What does tradition teach? (3) How are these claims related to the "experience" of the faithful? (4) Are your assumptions reasonable? In Wesley, faith and reason were not antagonists. They were both servants of the one true God. His sermons returned, again and again, to the themes of conversion, the new birth, the witness of the Spirit and "holiness of heart and life." Entries in his Journal referred repeatedly to people who were "under conviction," who were being pursued by divine grace, who were being delivered from their sins and cleansed by the Holy Spirit. Yet, more important than any of these particular emphases, giving meaning to them and binding them together into one coherent gospel was the *fact of Christ*. As a leading Wesleyan scholar has written: "In a hundred different ways on thousands of different occasions, decade after five decades, his one consistent message was Jesus Christ and him crucified—*Christus crucifixus, Christus redemptor, Christus victor*."<sup>2</sup> First Corinthians 1:30 ("You are in Christ Jesus by God's act, for God has made him our wisdom; he is our righteousness; in him we are consecrated and set free.") was one of his favorite texts and the overriding conviction of his life.

If Wesley was God's unique instrument in the revival, George Whitefield was the movement's most eloquent voice. Whitefield, a tavernkeeper's son who became one of the early members of the Holy Club at Oxford, preached with his trumpeting voice to vast multitudes of people in the open air. When the needs became too great and the burdens too heavy for ordained priests to carry on the work, lay preachers were utilized to meet with the societies and to preach the glad tidings.

The Wesleyan revival stirred the deepest emotions of the common people. It proclaimed a Word of hope to the lost and despairing. It was compelling, enthusiastic, and joyous. George Whitefield was the revival's most effective evangelist. Charles Wesley (John's younger brother) was its poet. He wrote more than sixty-five hundred hymns! Scores of them have become favorites of Christians the world over. Among his best-known are: "O for a Thousand Tongues," "Love Divine," "A Charge to Keep," "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" and "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing." Those early Wesleyans wept in both penitence and joy as they sang their songs of deliverance. Long before advance men, public relations techniques, and the mass media assured the "success" of professional evangelists, the Wesleyan revival swept across the British Isles like a contagion, and tens of thousands of people found literal new life in Christ.

John Wesley did not permit religious experience to become selfishly isolated and individualized. He saw it in terms of *community*. Societies were organized in

<sup>2</sup>Albert C. Outler, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1975), p. 45.

London, Bristol, and other towns and villages. Methodist chapels were built. Classes and "bands" were formed where fellow Christians could openly discuss their frailties, temptations, defeats, and victories. (Sensitivity training and human relations institutes aren't all that new.) In 1744, Wesley called a few preachers together for their first *conference*. Each year thereafter these people met to discuss their faith, their task and their strategies. Wesley never intended to form a new church. He was a priest of the Church of England to his dying day. But his concern for the spiritual nurture of new Christians—people long neglected by the Anglican Church—made the emergence of a new and distinct fellowship inevitable.

Wesley never left the Anglican Church, but the Anglican Church, especially during the early years of the revival, was openly hostile to Wesley. Church doors were closed to him. Preachers attacked him from their pulpits and rowdies assaulted him on street corners and in open fields. The bishop of Bristol, trying to silence him, cried, "You have no business here; you are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore I advise you to go hence." John Wesley calmly replied, "The world is my parish."

The world Wesley referred to was not only the world of time and space (although he traveled to Ireland twenty-one times and commissioned workers to come to America), it was also the world of human need. It was the world of the coal miner, the stonemason, the charwoman—the world of poverty, despair, loneliness, and fear. When Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, . . ." he was referring not only to Tanzania, Nepal and Uruguay; he was referring to the world of economic crisis, political action, and social problems; to the worlds where human beings eke out their livings and determine their earthbound destinies. This John Wesley understood.

It would be a mistake to view the Wesleyan revival as an exercise in social activism. It was passionately and intensely personal. Even so, the depth and spontaneity of its message had a revolutionary impact on its surroundings. The abolition of slavery, prison reform and the emergence of the labor movement in England are all directly related to the influence of the revival. Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin once chided those historians "who filled their pages with Napoleon and had nothing to say of John Wesley," adding that "they cannot explain *nineteenth* century England until they explain Wesley [nor can they] understand *twentieth* century America, unless [they] understand Wesley."<sup>3</sup> Following the First World War, Lloyd George acknowledged the tremendous fiscal debt Britain owed the United States. But, he said: "It is nothing compared to the debt that America owes us. Write on the balance sheet: Debtor, a thousand and ninety

millions; Creditor—John Wesley and George Whitefield."<sup>4</sup>

#### Across the Atlantic

There is a sense in which the first seeds of Methodism were planted in the American colonies in 1735 when John Wesley, not long away from Oxford, responded to the call of General James Oglethorpe and came to Georgia as a minister to colonists and a missionary among the Indians. He stayed only two years and returned to England considering his ministry a failure. In a moment of exaggerated self-condemnation he suggested that he had come to save the Indians though he had not yet been saved.

George Whitefield, far more than John Wesley, left the impress of his personality on the colonies. He was equally famous on both sides of the Atlantic. From 1738 to 1770, he made seven journeys to America crossing the Atlantic thirteen times. He was only twenty-four years old when he first came to Savannah. During the years that followed he preached from Georgia to New Hampshire and Maine. He knew America as few others and was one of the first unifying influences drawing the colonies together.

His second trip to America in 1739 brought him to Philadelphia. There his magnificent eloquence drew crowds of thirty thousand people. It has been said that "he probably preached to more people than any other preacher of the English speaking world during the eighteenth century."<sup>5</sup> While in Pennsylvania, Benjamin Franklin became his admirer and friend. Franklin helped him build a meetinghouse that was to become the nucleus of the University of Pennsylvania. Today a statue of Whitefield, as co-founder of the university, stands on the campus.

Whitefield came to America not as a Methodist but as a Christian evangelist. He visited Jonathan Edwards in Northampton, Massachusetts, and preached in his church. He preached at Harvard and Yale colleges. He visited William Tennent in Pennsylvania and identified with Gilbert Tennent and the other Log College revivalists in New Jersey and New York. He preached in Presbyterian and Anglican churches, in Baptist and Quaker meetinghouses, and—as in England—in the open air. Church historians link George Whitefield's name with those of Jonathan Edwards and the Tennents in explaining the Great Awakening, a tremendous religious movement that started in Massachusetts in the 1740s and swept through the colonies.

Whitefield died in New England and is buried there. Funeral sermons were preached in many American

<sup>3</sup>J. W. E. Bready, *This Freedom—Whence?* (New York: American Tract Society, 1942), p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>William W. Sweet, *Revivalism in America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1944), p. 32.

cities. In England the "official" funeral sermon was preached by John Wesley.<sup>6</sup>

If it is true that United Methodism is a direct descendant of the Wesleyan revival and stands in a special relationship to John and Charles Wesley and to George Whitefield, it is equally true that it is an American phenomenon.

Robert Strawbridge, a fiery and impetuous Irish Methodist lay preacher, settled in Frederick County, Maryland, in the early 1760s. He preached, administered the sacraments (though not ordained) and probably formed the first Methodist societies in America.

Two other Irish Christians, Philip Embury and Barbara Heck, began the first Methodist work in the city of New York. Their class rented a room near the British barracks, and soon Captain Thomas Webb, another colorful local preacher, joined them. In 1768, they built Wesley Chapel on John Street.

In 1769, Wesley sent Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor to America. Two years later they were joined by Francis Asbury, who was to be the architect of American Methodism.

But all immigrants to the colonies were not from England and Ireland. Thousands of German settlers had come to Pennsylvania. And just as the Wesleyan revival had stirred England, so had a rebirth of Pietism quickened the spirit of Germany. In fact, following his Aldersgate experience in 1738, Wesley had spent most of the summer at the Moravian settlement in Herrnhut, Germany, where his spirit and faith were strengthened. The influence of the Moravians on Wesley, both before and after his heartwarming experience, cannot be discounted. As Charles Parlin suggests, "It was the *German* revival which took hold of Wesley and reshaped his career."<sup>7</sup>

Philip William Otterbein was another product of that German revival. Son of a Reformed pastor and teacher, he was born in a village on the Dille River in 1726. Attending the best Calvinist schools of Germany, he was ordained to the ministry of the German Reformed Church in 1749. In company with five others, Otterbein came to the New World in 1752. In early August he was sent to Lancaster, a town of two thousand souls, in Pennsylvania. There "he perceived in his solitary meditations, that there was a higher religious life than he had attained, and he became a regenerated and sanctified man."<sup>8</sup> Following this heart-warming awareness, Otterbein's life reflected a new quality and zeal.

In 1760, he moved to Frederick, Maryland. Because

of his religious intensity and enthusiasm, he fell into disfavor with many of his Reformed brothers. In 1774, he was called to the pulpit of the Second German Reformed Church of Baltimore. He served the church, now affectionately known as "Old Otterbein," until his death some forty years later. Although Otterbein never left the ministry of the German Reformed Church (just as Wesley never left the Church of England), his congregation became semi-independent and took the name "The German Evangelical Reformed Church"—and five weeks before his death he ordained three men for the Christian ministry just as Wesley had ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vesey for their ministries in America.

Philip Otterbein and Francis Asbury became close friends. Asbury was deeply impressed by Otterbein's scholarship, ability and devotion. And Otterbein respected Asbury and admired Methodist "discipline." According to Asbury, Otterbein "agreed to imitate our methods as nearly as possible"<sup>9</sup> in the Baltimore church. When the United Brethren were organized in 1789, Methodist polity and discipline were adopted by them.

Martin Boehm, a Pennsylvania farmer, became a close associate of Otterbein and one of the first bishops of the United Brethren in Christ. When a young man, Boehm, a Mennonite, was chosen by lot (a Mennonite custom) to serve as pastor of his church. Reluctant, fearful, painfully aware of his inadequacies, he prayed for grace and guidance. They came. He began to preach with great effectiveness. Otterbein, when he heard him during a revival in Long's Barn in the late 1760s, was deeply impressed. Boehm also knew Robert Strawbridge and joined a Methodist society. His home became a regular preaching place for the Methodists. During these early years the United Brethren preachers used the German language. The Methodists spoke in English. The preaching places of the two were open to the ministers of each, and revival meetings were often held jointly by the United Brethren and Methodists.

Like Otterbein, Boehm was in disfavor with his church because of his fervent preaching and, in 1780, was expelled by the Mennonites. In 1800, the ministers associated with Philip Otterbein and Martin Boehm began their custom of meeting annually. Otterbein and Boehm were named general superintendents (bishops) of their fellowship.

Jacob Albright, the son of German immigrants, was born on a Pennsylvania farm in 1759. He was baptized and received his catechetical training in the Lutheran Church. Always a fine and respected man, he entered a period of profound spiritual despair following the loss of two beloved children. Attending a Methodist

<sup>6</sup>Stuart C. Henry, *George Whitefield: Wayfaring Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1957), pp. 13-15.

<sup>7</sup>Charles Parlin, "Our Common Heritage," an address.

<sup>8</sup>Abel Stevens, *History of Methodism*, vol. 1 (New York: Carlton and Lanahan, 1858), p. 218.

<sup>9</sup>Francis Asbury's *Journal*, May 3, 1774.

class meeting, he felt his burden lifted and experienced a "blessed assurance." Shortly thereafter he was granted his exhorter's license and began to preach.

About 1800, a number of people living in three different communities, moved by the power of Albright's preaching, agreed to enter into a covenant together. In 1803, a council was formed by "The Albright People" and a *Discipline* was approved. The first annual preachers' meeting was convened in 1807, and they called themselves The Newly Formed Methodist Conference. Nine years later they took the name The Evangelical Association, which was continued until 1922. The message of this group, like that of the United Brethren in Christ, stressed conversion and personal holiness.

As Paul Eller has written:

What separated Otterbein from most of the German Reformed clergy, and Boehm from most of the Mennonite preachers, and Albright from the Lutherans was not that any one of them had received a special revelation or some radically new doctrine. These men were not come-outers. They sought to make disciples of Christ, not proselytes. What distinguished these three and kindred revivalists of the time was the new and dynamic emphasis given to the preaching of salvation. For these preachers, salvation was the first and foremost of the articles of faith.<sup>10</sup>

As we have already seen, an intimate and natural relationship existed among the Methodists, the United Brethren, and the Albright evangelicals. During these formative years the one group was often called "English Methodists" while the Otterbein-Boehm-Albright groups were called "German Methodists." Francis Asbury regarded Otterbein as a father in the faith and asked that he participate in his consecration as a bishop of the Methodist Church at the Christmas Conference in 1784. Preaching Otterbein's funeral sermon, Asbury said, "Forty years have I known the retiring modesty of this man of God; towering majestic above his fellows in learning, wisdom and grace, yet seeking to be known only of God."<sup>11</sup>

In many respects Francis Asbury did for America what Wesley did for England. He arose daily at 4:00 A.M. and preached his first sermon an hour later. He logged some two hundred and seventy thousand miles riding through the wilderness, crossing and recrossing the Allegheny Mountains more than sixty times. While in the saddle he taught himself Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. From 1785 until 1816, there were two hundred and fifty district and annual conferences in his church, and he presided over all but fourteen. He ordained virtually all the Methodist preachers and "fixed" their appointments. He, more than anyone else, developed the strategy of the circuit rider, encouraged the use of the camp meeting, and made

possible the spiritual conquest of the frontier. His last conferences were held in 1815. Reported were 167,978 white members and 43,187 black members. There were nine annual conferences with 704 preachers and *more than seven thousand preaching places!*

Circuit riders, class meetings, and conferences kept pace with the expansion of the West. Fervent preaching; raucous singing; earnest praying; and the exhausting pace of frontier preachers, with an insistent emphasis upon free grace, Christian love, and active piety, provided the content of the movement. Preaching in homes, barns, crude chapels, dance halls, saloons, courthouses, school buildings and under the open skies, these hardy servants of the cross followed the trail of the pioneers. If they were single they received sixty-four dollars a year. They traveled on horseback with nothing in their saddle-bags but scant clothing, their Bibles and hymnals, and books to sell. More than half of them, succumbing to the hardship of the wilderness, were dead before they were thirty-five. This is our American heritage as United Methodists. We should not, however, assume that our nineteenth-century heritage is limited to frontier revivalism. There were ardent abolitionists in our churches. Education became a passion. The temperance movement was synonymous with Methodist social conscience. Evangelical, United Brethren, and Methodist missionaries fanned out across the world. And, in the first half of the twentieth century, the development of the first Protestant "social creed," an identification with the labor movement, and the emergence of a major peace emphasis became hallmarks of these churches' continuing witness to the world.

There were divisions. In 1816, the African Methodist Episcopal Church was formally organized by blacks who had been mistreated by white Methodists. In 1822, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was formed—an outgrowth of "the first church edifice built expressly for people of color in New York." In 1828, a group of deeply committed and godly people, rebelling against bishops and seeking more lay authority, formed the Methodist Protestant Church. In 1844, the issue of slavery and other constitutional matters split the Methodist Episcopal Church and gave birth to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. The Colored (now Christian) Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in 1870, following the Civil War, by and for black Methodists in the South. In 1891, a number of ministers and lay persons took the name "United Evangelical Church" and withdrew from the Evangelical Association.

But these divisions, except for those involving black Methodist denominations, have been healed.

In 1922, The Evangelical Association and The United Evangelical Church became The Evangelical Church.

<sup>10</sup>Paul Eller, *These Evangelical United Brethren* (Dayton, Ohio: Otterbein Press, 1957), p. 30.

<sup>11</sup>Francis Asbury's *Journal*, March 24, 1814.

In 1939, The Methodist Episcopal Church, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and The Methodist Protestant Church became The Methodist Church.

In 1946, The Church of the United Brethren in Christ and The Evangelical Church became the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

And, in 1968, The United Methodist Church was born.

### The United Methodist Church

Christian Newcomer, later a bishop of the United Brethren, wrote in his Journal for April 1, 1803:

I attended the [Methodist] Conference. It was my intention to make a proposition to the Conference in order to ascertain whether it was possible to adopt a plan of operation by which the English and German brethren could be more united and have a better understanding with each other. I imparted my design to one of the members of the Conference, but he advised me to defer the proposition until the meeting of the next General Conference. I took his advice and was silent on the subject. In a short time I repented of having complied with the advice given me and I felt inwardly accused of not having done my duty.

In 1871, the Evangelical Association actually voted, by a margin of one, to join the Methodists. The margin was too slim, and the matter was dropped.

On April 23, 1968, following many years of conversation and negotiation, The United Methodist Church, formed by the former Methodist Church and the former Evangelical United Brethren Church, came into being. The two had shared a common historic and spiritual heritage. Their doctrines and forms of church government were similar. Their only major difference, that of language, had long since disappeared. The two became one.

Albert Outler preached the sermon during the service of union on that April day in 1968. Looking toward continuing openness and growth, he said:

When more of us get accustomed to the notion that this new church of ours can be remade for yet more effective mission, for still more authentic democracy and local initiative, for still more efficient, adventurous leadership—and that all this could be done and should be done forthwith!—then the pooled wisdom of our fellowship will surely be enabled to prove that rational, responsible change is a far more faithful pattern of obedience to Christ than the most devoted immobilism can ever be!

### Resources

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## THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

Harry W. Robie

The sharing of the gospel through witness and service is the ministry that belongs to all Christians. A major purpose of lay speaking is to help persons become effective communicators of the gospel. It is anticipated that the training provided in the lay speaker program will help you develop your skill in "witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication." In this chapter we will describe some of the elements of the art of communication through the spoken word.

In the beginning we must emphasize the purpose for which you speak. You are speaking not because it is an honor or privilege to do so. You are speaking not to fill up time in a program or worship service. You are speaking solely to witness to the Christian faith. To do this, you must always remember that your real goal is to persuade, to affect, to influence your audience.

Many people speak because "they want to help out" or because "they were asked." But these should not be the purposes of speaking. If you do not have a message to share with your audiences, you have wasted their time and yours. What the audience may think of you is really unimportant compared to what they think of your message. What is important is that you have persuaded them to a deeper commitment to

Christ. It makes sense, therefore, that we begin our chapter on the art of communication by talking about what it takes to persuade others.

### Tools of Persuasion

Three persuasive tools which you can use regardless of subject are your personal qualities, emotional appeals, and logical reasoning.

Let us begin with personal qualities. In your own life you can recall times when you were persuaded to behave in a certain way because you admired or trusted the person who was talking to you. Your listeners are no different. They expect you to practice what you preach. They will respond if they perceive that you are an authority on the subject you are talking about, that you have good character, and that you have their best interests at heart. It follows, then, that you will be a better speaker (that is, a more persuasive speaker) if you are seen favorably by your audience. Your first job as a lay speaker, therefore, is to improve yourself. That improvement must occur in all the areas we have just mentioned. Authority, character, and good will reinforce one another, and your weakness in any one of these areas will have an affect

on your overall persuasive impact. Learn everything you can about your subject; improve yourself as a person; identify your message with the interests of your audience. You cannot do these things overnight, of course, but as you improve over the years so will your ability to influence others.

Personal qualities, however, are not the only persuasive elements in your speaking. Almost as important is your ability to affect the emotions of your audience. Consider yourself once again: there are few areas in your life where your emotions do not play a role in your decisions. Family life, work relationships, church participation are all influenced to a certain extent by what you feel. Because all humans act partly on the basis of their loves, their fears, and their hopes it would be a mistake not to take account of human emotions when you wish to persuade.

But a word of warning is necessary here. We are not talking about appealing to violent or uncontrollable emotions. We are not suggesting that you frighten your audience into Christian behavior through lurid accounts of hellfire and damnation. People can be influenced by appealing to hope as well as to fear, and although some individuals can be threatened into becoming better, this procedure does not work with most people on most occasions. There are other emotions which a Christian speaker will wish to stimulate in the audience. Among these are compassion, charity, and those other virtues so frequently mentioned in the letters of Paul. Quite important, according to many modern thinkers, is the emotional need to find meaning in one's life. Think of the kinds of feelings you want Christians to have; then gear your speaking toward arousing these feelings.

A third tool you have in persuading others is logical reasoning. We do not mean anything complicated by this, only that what you say must accord with the dictates of common sense. If you are logical, the parts of your message will fit together smoothly and clearly. You lead your audience carefully, one step at a time. You support your statements by using as many reasons and examples as necessary to convince your audience. You back up your conclusions with evidence which your listeners can easily accept.

### Narrowing the Subject

To establish the subject clearly in your own mind, ask yourself what you hope will be the persuasive effect of your speech. Let us say that you have been asked to give a report on the church's financial condition. Obviously a dry report is not persuasive in itself. Your real persuasive purpose is to inspire the church members to make a greater financial commitment during the coming year. Or again, your minister has suddenly become ill and you have been asked to deliver the sermon on Sunday. Here your goal is not to preach a sermon or fill in for the minister, although of

course you will do these things. Rather your goal will be to influence the congregation in some specific way that will enable them to live more effectively as Christians.

Whatever your message or the occasion, you should know exactly what it is that you want your audience to think, feel, or do after you have finished. Determine how you wish to influence or change your audience before you do anything else. That is your destination, and you must establish it before you begin to worry about what roads to take to reach that destination.

After you know where you want to take your audience, try next to find out where they are right now. If they have already arrived where you want to take them, it would not be very worthwhile talking about that subject. Or if they are a long way from the destination, you might decide to take them on a series of easy stages rather than on the whole journey all at once. But whatever the case, the more you know about your audience's attitudes and behavior, the more persuasive you will be. You are not a mind reader, but you have been observing others all your life. Now is the time to put your knowledge of others to work.

When you have established your destination and more or less know your audience's present location, you are ready to choose your specific subject matter. We have already provided you with some general guidelines. Briefly, you should pick a subject which (1) you can speak on with some authority, (2) can arouse a desirable emotional response in your audience, and (3) can be logically developed and supported. You will receive some helpful ideas about subject matter and resources from other chapters in this book. The following are some general rules of thumb about topic selection.

First, pick a subject that will interest your audience, not necessarily yourself (although ideally it will engage your interest too). Second, pick your illustrative material from a wide variety of sources. Of course you will wish to use the Bible as much as possible, but do not neglect your personal experiences, news events, the sports pages, contemporary music and literature, and even comic strips. Third, illustrate your subject with stories about real people. If you can make these people come alive to your audience, you will interest them as you never could with abstract arguments and dry statistics. To have illustrative material readily available, take a couple of dozen envelopes or folders and drop interesting material in them as you come across it. Fourth, tell the truth. Never "stretch a little." Do not make up stories or guess at facts. Verify the information you are using. Nothing will damage your effectiveness more than being caught in an inaccuracy or untruth. Finally, devote at least part of each day to reading. You cannot find the merchandise you want in a grocery store that has nothing on its shelves. Likewise, you will never find the right things in your mind if you have not kept it well stocked.

## Organizing Your Message

Assuming you now have your persuasive material, your next problem is to put it into some kind of order. You have probably heard that all extended messages should have an introduction, body, and conclusion. This advice is sometimes put another way: "Tell the audiences what you're going to say; say it; and tell them what you've said." We shall examine each of these three phases of your message.

Introductions are of many kinds, but they have one essential feature: they are designed to catch and focus the attention of the audience. Every one's attention wanders sometimes, and at the very beginning of your message there are probably very few in your audience who are thinking on the same wavelength as you are. So you first have to catch attention; then you must focus it on the specific points you plan to develop in the body. There are a number of ways you can do this:

1. *Illustration.* Since people are interested in people, telling a story which leads into your message is a very popular attention-getting technique. Pick up any of the more popular magazines and notice how many of their articles capture your interest by means of an introductory story.

2. *Quotation.* This is usually considered a rather formal opening, but much of your speaking may be in formal situations. Sermons, you will recall, are often started this way. The scriptural text read earlier in the service is frequently chosen because it will lead very naturally into the subject of the sermon.

3. *Reference to the occasion.* On special occasions the audience may have been attracted by the nature of the events themselves. Messages delivered during the Advent or Lenten seasons, for example, call attention to those special times of the church year.

4. *Rhetorical questions.* When someone asks you a question, you usually try to come up with an answer, even if you do not make an audible response. Rhetorical questions are statements framed in question form. The speaker does not really expect the audience to answer his questions out loud, but he does expect that the audience will begin to think about his subject.

5. *Personal greetings.* Sometimes, particularly if you are a stranger to the group you are addressing, you will want to introduce yourself before you begin the main part of your message. In a sense, this opening is merely a more extended version of what you do when you meet someone on a conversational level.

6. *Startling statement.* A statement which is unexpected by the audience will hold their attention simply because of its novelty. Paul used a startling statement in a sermon which he delivered in Athens and which was later reprinted in the Book of Acts:

I see that in every way you Athenians are very religious. For as I walked through your city and looked at the places where you worship, I found an altar on which is written, "To an Unknown God." That which you worship, then, even though you do not know it, is what I now proclaim to you. (Acts 17:22-23)

Here Paul referred to the devotion of the Athenians. Then, unexpectedly, he asserted that he had surprising information about a God whom they had been unknowingly worshiping for years. It was an excellent way to keep a potentially hostile audience listening to what he had to say.

7. *Humor.* If you are a humorous person, by all means use humor to catch your audience's attention. No one ever said that a United Methodist church had to be stuffy. But if you are not naturally funny, avoid this technique at all costs. A joke which falls flat is much worse than no joke at all. And do not use humor if it is not pertinent to your subject. Unrelated humor merely distracts the audience from your persuasive purpose.

Whether you use a single one of these introductory techniques or a combination, you have one more obligation before you enter the body of your speech. After you have caught attention, a transitional step, often called a partition, focuses that attention by giving your listeners a clear map of the territory they are entering. If you plan to examine both sides of a question, or show a problem and its solution, or divide your subject into three major parts, tell them so. You will find your audience more capable of following you if they know exactly where you plan to go. After all, listeners cannot turn back a few pages to find out what they have missed. Once you have lost them, you may have lost them for good.

You are now ready for the body of your speech. Here you present your major points and support them with as much material as is necessary to convince your audience. Since you are in the longest part of your message, you must be particularly well organized. The most common forms of body organization are listed here.

1. *Topical order.* In this organization, you divide your subject into a number of related and approximately equal categories and then develop each. For example, you could speak of the economic, political, and social consequences of a particular action. You could categorize certain kinds of people or behavior. You could present a number of reactions to a particular idea. Whatever the case, certain advice is helpful when handling this organization. First, your topics should be few in number. It is better to develop three to five topics adequately than to fail to develop a larger number. Second, your topics should be capable of equal treatment as far as time is concerned. Third, your topics ought to be nonoverlapping but related subdivisions of the same major subject. For example, if you were to talk about the benefits of the church

nursery program, you would be well organized if you were to break the body of your message down into benefits to the child, the church, and the community. On the other hand, if you were to talk on benefits to boys, benefits to children of church members, and the costs of the program, your audience would find it extremely difficult to tie your points together.

2. *Climactic order.* Topically organized bodies are often arranged by order of importance—from small to large, few to many, least significant to most significant.

3. *Spatial order.* Topics are also frequently arranged in space. You might describe the major parts of the church building by beginning at the front entrance and mentally taking your listener through to the rear. Or in a speech on church organization, you might begin with the local church and then move on to the cluster, the district, and the conference. Note that in this second example you have also arranged your geographical divisions in a climactic order.

4. *Problem-solution.* This organization takes into account a common psychological trait in human beings. Most of us are willing to accept present conditions if the alternative is to take on something which is new and untried. We would "rather bear those ills we have than fly to others we know not of." If someone is to persuade us to modify our behavior in the face of this reluctance to change, the speaker must first convince us that a significant harm exists, a harm that can be alleviated only through the adoption of his or her solution. You can probably think of many instances when a legislator, a salesman, or a church speaker has employed an organization which (1) demonstrates a real problem, (2) proposes a solution, and (3) illustrates the advantages to be derived from adopting that solution. So common a speech organization is this, in fact, that it is often the only form taught by many speech teachers.

5. *Pro-con.* Speakers who use this model show one side of a question, then develop the other side, and finally come to a conclusion in which they form either a synthesis of the two positions or choose between them. Speakers sometimes omit this third step and leave their conclusions up in the air. However, it is difficult to persuade an audience if the speaker is incapable of making up his or her mind. Be definite.

6. *Elimination order.* If you cannot prove a certain decision is a good one, you might be able to reach the same destination by proving that any other alternative would be incorrect or ineffective. This indirect method of reaching a conclusion, however, should probably only be used if you cannot utilize one of the other body organizations.

7. *Chronological order.* Any time you tell a story, you almost naturally follow this organization. As the name implies, this formula requires you to arrange your material according to the time in which it takes place.

The bodies we have described may be combined

with the various introductions to make totally different kinds of messages. For instance, you might handle a given subject by combining an opening illustration with a topical body, or the same subject might be developed by using a startling statement with problem-solution. Your choice depends upon which organization you think will be most persuasive with your particular audience. Of course, there are other ways to organize your message beyond what we have listed here. If you use some less well-known form, however, you may be in trouble. Audiences may be unable to follow a new or unfamiliar development. If you must be original, let it be in your content, not your organization.

The final part of a well organized message is the conclusion. Your purpose here is to restate your main ideas. Often you do this with a summary: you simply state the major points all over again. But there are other ways. In the call-to-action conclusion you restate by calling upon your listeners to make a particular commitment or perform a certain act. With a statement of personal intent, you let your own commitment to a certain action serve as an example to your audience. If you can find quotations or illustrations which restate your main ideas, you may use these. Last, you may wish to echo your opening statements; that is, you can come "full circle" by referring to an expression or question or illustration used at the beginning of your speech.

### Speaking Style

Speaking style in the twentieth century is quite conversational; in other words, the language you use is the same as that you use in interpersonal communication. In everyday speech you probably tailor your language to fit the person to whom you are talking. You probably speak a bit differently to your children, your spouse, or your co-workers. Adopt that same sophistication with your audiences.

Good speaking style may be quite plain or very fancy; it all depends on the nature of the speaker and the expectations of the audience. But however simple or ornate the language, a good speaking style is always characterized by accuracy and clarity. It says exactly what you mean and is easily understood. Good style is also appropriate to the occasion, forceful, and lively. Finally, a good style is economical. You should never use ten words where one would do. If your message needs development, expand the number of ideas, not the number of words.

Connotation is an important concept to remember when you are working on improving your style. Connotation refers to the emotional associations we build around words through their constant use. Consider the two words "house" and "residence." The dictionary meaning is the same, but the first word

seems warmer and more intimate than the second. Since the emotional impact of your message is quite important, it would seem desirable to select the words you use for their connotative value. If certain words like "preacher," "pastor," and "minister" are interchangeable as far as their dictionary meanings are concerned, pick the one which best arouses the emotion you wish to stimulate in your audience.

Good style may also be achieved by occasionally using the figures of speech. You may remember a teacher giving a class long lists of Greek terms and thoroughly confusing everyone when the figures of speech were discussed. The term merely means an unexpected use of language. Puns and tongue twisters are figures of speech because they use words in unexpected ways. We do not have to know their technical names to understand and appreciate figures of speech. In the time you have available for training as a lay speaker, you cannot learn the technical names for all the figures, but we hope that you will improve your ability to recognize and use some of them in your own speaking.

In the Bible the most frequent figures of speech are parallelism and metaphor. Parallelism occurs if we use similar phrasing to express similar ideas. "Of the people, by the people, for the people" is an example. Parallelism is used in the Psalms, which constantly repeat ideas by rephrasing them in similar language. The Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount are expressed in parallel order (they also illustrate paradox, a figure of speech which asserts that two opposites can both be true at the same time).

The reader will also note much use in the Bible of metaphor, in which there is an implied comparison between two unlike things. Jesus asks us to consider the lilies of the field; Paul tells us that he once saw through a glass darkly, and implores us to put on the whole armor of God. In these cases they were comparing two unlike things in order to make their points more vivid. From this brief presentation you can see that figures of speech are certainly worth more of your attention than we are able to give them in this chapter.

### Delivering the Message

One is ready to work on delivery only after the materials have been gathered and organized, and the language with which one wishes to express them has been considered. The word *delivery* will be used to stand for every one of the physical factors which come into play when you give your message: the type of room, the size and nature of the audience, the distance between you and the audience, the clothes you wear, the use of the voice, facial expressions, posture, gesture, and movement. All these factors are united in one. When you use them ineffectively, they will

detract from the influence you have and, indeed, may cause your audience not to listen to your message at all.

Generally speaking, the way we deliver messages today is much more informal and conversational than it once was, but the exact degree of informality depends upon the audience. If you are communicating to a small group in an intimate setting, your delivery ought to be pleasant, conversational, relaxed. As the audience and the room become larger so, in a sense, does your delivery. You become more formal, more "oratorical," more deliberate. Objects between you and the audience, such as desks, lecterns, or pulpits, increase the "psychological distance" between you and your audience, and require greater formality in your presentation. Occasions which permit a sports shirt in one congregation require a robe in another. It takes a sensitive awareness on your part to know exactly how much informality your listeners will permit and even appreciate.

Whenever you speak, you must appear as interested in what you are saying as you expect your audience to be. People's facial expressions and gestures are quite evident in conversational situations; indeed, even when persons talk to an unseen other party on the telephone they will smile, frown, and move their free hands in expressive ways. However, when in front of an audience, these same vibrant and alive people often freeze. Understandably, they may feel a little uncomfortable before a group. In fact, most people are uncomfortable when speaking to groups. This is all the more reason to fight our natural tendency to withdraw into ourselves, because the best way to conquer embarrassment is to become absolutely, totally involved in what we are saying. Your facial expressions and gestures will take care of themselves the less you think of yourself and the more you think of your message and its effect upon your audience. Angry people are beautifully expressive. They literally explode from their chairs; their fists clench; their faces redden and contort; their bodies straighten and tense. They have actually forgotten themselves and are completely committed to getting their message across in the strongest terms possible. They are "carried away." Your own delivery will be as involved if you concentrate on the importance of your ideas and remember that, as a lay speaker, you are the instrument through which your church persuades.

To develop your confidence in speaking, watch the delivery of other speakers with the view of adapting some of their better characteristics into your own presentation. Note how varied gestures can distract. Note how certain gestures can be appropriate or inappropriate to the thought expressed. Note how facial expressions can underscore the speaker's verbal expressions of concern, shock, or dismay. Note especially how trained speakers move their eyes randomly about the room, yet manage to focus

momentarily on everyone in their audience. This eye contact is one of the most attention-getting and attention-keeping devices a speaker can use.

Pay attention also to how trained speakers use their voices. We are familiar with the vocal expressiveness of singers, but we may not realize that to a lesser extent speakers may use the same techniques. True, they do not sing or chant their messages. But they use pauses to punctuate their ideas orally or to allow time for important ideas to sink in. They avoid a dreary monotone by varying the pitch of their voices. In some places, depending upon the effect they wish to create, they speed up; in others they slow down. The words they say most emphatically are precisely those words which need to be stressed for the order and importance of their ideas to be clear.

The gestures and vocal variety of trained speakers illustrate the fact that while delivery is not the only ingredient in speaking, it is nevertheless important. But do not concentrate on performance only. The good speaker combines personal qualities, emotional appeals, logic, specific subject matter, organization, style, and delivery.

### Specific Speaking Opportunities

So far in the chapter we have talked about these general qualities of the speaker without specifying the kinds of speaking in which they may be used. In another chapter you will read of the many service opportunities available to the lay speaker. The service opportunities are described there according to function. In the remainder of this chapter we will group your opportunities in another way—according to the speaking skills they require. We have made four such divisions: reading, individual speaking, speaking in small, informal groups, and formal group presentation.

**Reading.** Reading opportunities occur very frequently within the church. You might be asked to narrate a cantata, present a report, or read a scripture lesson. Your job as a speaker is simplified because the development of ideas, their organization, and the style in which they are expressed have already been determined for you. You can concentrate solely on the presentation of those ideas. You must use the words of the original composer, but like the musician you are allowed to interpret those words. Your interpretation will determine whether the words will take wing or continue to lie on the page.

If you have the opportunity, study the words in advance. Break the selection down into its parts and notice how the parts relate to one another. Your listeners must also comprehend these relationships, and only after you have seen them yourself can you hope to convey them to your audience. Next practice your message out loud, ideally in the same physical

surroundings where you will eventually present it. If the exact conditions are impossible to reproduce, any kitchen, bathroom, garage, or field will do—the important thing is not to read the piece but actually present it the way you think it should be presented. Practice out loud until you think you have achieved the same impact as the original author intended, and until you will be able to use your eyes to hold the attention of the audience.

A listener is very helpful in these practice sessions. We suggest the following checklist for use by a listener:

- Can the passage be clearly understood?
- Are there any sections which seem unclear?
- Are important words and passages emphasized?
- Is the mood of the passage clearly transmitted?
- Is the reader's posture appropriate?
- Are there any facial expressions and gestures which particularly reinforce the meaning of the passage?
- Are there any distracting facial expressions and gestures?
- Is the voice pleasing in quality and varied where appropriate?
- Are all words correctly pronounced?

*Individual Speaking.* Prospective lay speakers probably think first of individual speaking when they are asked to define their future roles in the life of the church. By now you should be aware that this form of speaking will be only one of your functions. The communicator addressing an audience by himself or herself has always had a prominent part to play in Protestant Christianity. You may not find yourself called upon to deliver many sermons in Sunday worship services, but you will still find yourself many times alone in front of a group to give a sermon, present a report, or deliver a lecture.

Just about everything we have said so far in the chapter applies to this individual speaking. There is, however, one further point we need to stress—the difference between speaking and reading. The fact that this has not been emphasized enough has probably been as much a reason for the emptying of churches as the attractiveness of sin. The reason is clear to all of us with some experience in listening to speakers: if a person reads to an audience for an extended period of time (more than five to eight minutes) they will be bored. Sermons and long reports that are read instead of spoken receive glassy-eyed stares instead of audience attention. Odds are, if you have ever fallen asleep in church, it was because someone read to you instead of speaking to you. Reading certainly has its place; one cannot be expected to do anything else with a scripture lesson or a secretary's report. But reading's place is not where individual speaking should be done instead.

The read speech causes a number of problems. First, written English has a different style from oral English. When writing, you use a different vocabulary with fewer personal pronouns and contractions, and your sentences are more standardized in length and structure. Written English read out loud will sound stiffer and more wooden than your ordinary conversational speaking. Second, the read speech ties you to the manuscript. You will lose eye contact with your audience; your gestures will tend to be more restricted and mechanical; your voice will lose its conversational quality. Third, and most important, the manuscript will cause you to lose your sense of communication: you will stick to the words on the paper instead of adjusting to feedback from your audience, and you will be more conscious of getting the speech read than of persuading.

For these reasons we suggest that the best type of speech presentation for your purposes is extemporaneous speaking. Here you speak from an outline instead of a manuscript. You will be more flexible as a result, more persuasive, more natural. Since you have been speaking much longer and more frequently than you have been writing, better oral style will come out of your mouth than you could possibly put down on paper. If the thought of speaking from an outline worries you, then practice out loud as many times as you can. If while practicing you come up with a particularly good phrase, remember to use it the next time. And if for some reason the particular word you want does not come to mind when you need it, smile, grope for the word, and carry on.

Props are sometimes used by speakers to emphasize points. If these props really do make a person's message more persuasive, they should be used. But props, like excessive speech notes, can often get in the way of persuasion. Avoid any props which are just gimmicks and not integral parts of your message. Avoid props which require too much time and effort to manipulate. Avoid props so spectacular that they become the sole focus of audience interest. If prepared signs or newsprint outlines are involved, make sure they can be read from the farthest reaches of the audience.

We cannot overemphasize the idea that practice makes better, and some even maintain that it makes perfect. Have someone listen to you in these practice situations checking the following points:

- Is the subject developed in a reasonable and appropriate manner? Does the speaker show maturity and judgment in the way the subject is handled? Do you come away with something new?
- Are the speaker's facts and examples interesting and illuminating? Do they really help prove the points of the message?
- Does the speech show evidence of careful planning? Do you always know where you have been in the

speech and where you are heading? Are you clearly aware of where the introduction ends and where the conclusion begins? Can you remember clearly the main points of the body?

- Is the speaker's voice colorful, appropriate, and exact? Does he or she make effective use of the voice? Do the gestures and movements reinforce the message?
- Does the speaker attempt to make the communication meaningful and interesting to the audience? Is the speaker credible as a source? Does he or she possess naturalness, poise, and sincerity?

*Speaking in Small, Informal Groups.* There are so many different small groups that it is difficult to make uniform suggestions about how to participate in them. Basically, the small groups in which you may be asked to participate will be of the following kinds: (1) panels, often guided by a leader called the moderator, and consisting of a guided conversation among the panel members; (2) symposia, which resemble panels but make use of short set speeches instead of conversation; (3) study or prayer groups, which may call for a presentation by the leader followed by group discussion or prayer, and which may use a study guide or textbook; (4) forums, which take these forms of group process and throw them open at some stage to audience questions or participation; and (5) interaction groups, often called encounter, sensitivity, or sharing groups, which make use of certain exercises to explore feelings and attitudes. Whatever the structure of the small group, its goal is usually to reach some kind of consensus or group agreement concerning the issue the small group has been called upon to consider, or to explore in depth the dimensions of the issue.

Effective participation in small groups calls for an understanding of both leader and member roles and behaviors, and the constructive or destructive aspects of these roles and behaviors on group functioning.

Some kinds of behavior build and maintain the group. Some members will make the others more comfortable and eager to share. They will make sure that everyone has a chance to make a contribution. They will look for ways to resolve disagreement among other panel members and set standards for the group to follow while proceeding with its discussion. Occasionally, they will help to relieve the tension that might be building within the group by directing the others toward more pleasant directions.

Other kinds of behavior help to get the job of the small group done. Members will initiate new ideas or strategies for reaching the goal. They will be eager either to seek or supply information or opinions. They will clarify obscure points, elaborate on the ideas of others, and summarize the progress of the group.

When behavior does not center on the group and its task, but focuses on the individual instead of the

group, it can keep the collective enterprise of the group from being accomplished. Aggression and withdrawal are examples of this kind of behavior. The person who pays no attention to others, doodles, or whispers to neighbors is being just as destructive of the group process as the aggressive individual. Ego-building behavior is also destructive; some people will call attention to themselves, plead their own special causes, or try to dominate the rest of the people in the group.

The leader of small groups must be very careful not to step over the line which separates discussion from lectures or question-answer recitations. The leadership role in a small group may be very authoritarian or quite democratic; but, whatever the case, the leader should not enter the discussion, though he or she must lead it, and should not make decisions, though he or she must continually test to see if the group is ready to make one. If the group members are going to reach consensus, they must do it by themselves; and although the leader may guide, he or she must not take over.

Anyone preparing to be a lay speaker will discover that one skill which is more and more in demand is the ability to participate effectively in small groups. Three publications which every prospective lay speaker should read are: Philip H. Anderson's *Church Meetings That Matter*, Dorothy LaCroix Hill's *Leading a Group and Building the Team* (see resource list). All are church publications specifically designed to help you in this area. Of all the kinds of speaking which we have mentioned, this will probably be the one to engage most of your time.

*Large, Formal Groups.* Less frequently you may find yourself participating in larger groups run according to clearly defined rules. While such formality is not necessary for most local church business, it is quite helpful for occasions like administrative board meetings, which bring together church members representing a number of different groups, some of whom have contradictory aims. Because a large group cannot operate with the same freedom and informality as a small one, because disagreements may need definite procedures by which they can be resolved, and because individuals might otherwise find themselves lost in the crowd during the meeting, a specific set of rules has evolved for the running of large meetings. This set of rules is called parliamentary procedure.

A number of special terms are used by parliamentary bodies. An *agenda* is a list of the items that will be brought up at a meeting; and often, either out of courtesy or because it is a legal requirement, this agenda is published in advance. *Points of information* and *points of order* are parliamentary enquiries raised by members, either to find out what is going on or to question the procedure being used. A number of

other terms, such as *ex officio*, *plurality*, *quorum*, *roll call*, and so forth are perhaps familiar to you because of parliamentary procedure's close connection to our nation's political process.

The matter of *motions* is perhaps the thorniest obstacle in the learning of parliamentary procedure. Motions, *i.e.*, proposals to do various things, must be brought up in a certain order and handled in a certain way. The reason for this is that any large meeting needs a fair, orderly, and consistent way of handling its business. The most common kinds of motions are as follows:

1. To fix the time for the next meeting
2. To adjourn
3. To recess
4. To lay on the table
5. To stop debate ("call for the question"—2/3 vote)
6. To postpone to a definite time
7. To refer to a committee
8. To amend an amendment
9. To amend a primary motion
10. The primary motion

These motions are ranked in order; that is, if all ten motions were to be brought up at the same time the chairperson would be obligated to take them in order, beginning with the first one listed. For example, if there is a main motion on the floor, a motion to amend, a motion to table, and a motion to recess, the chairperson must initially allow action on the fourth of these motions. Then he or she must have the house act upon the motion to table. After this motion is handled, he or she has the house consider in the turn the motion to amend and finally the main motion itself.

Being a chairperson of a parliamentary meeting is an arduous assignment, and even United Methodist bishops, who must live and breathe parliamentary procedure during certain parts of the church year, have been known to throw up their hands in dismay. Fortunately, most of us will never be instant bishops; we do not have to learn how to run formal meetings all at once. Chairpersons usually play long apprenticeships as ordinary members, serving in various capacities within the organization and learning by doing as they go along. They may belong to other organizations run according to parliamentary procedure. They can refer to written procedures, such as written constitutions and by-laws, or the *Discipline* of our church. Finally, they have recourse to manuals such as the definitive Robert's *Rules of Order*. Either through education or experience they will learn how to run a formal meeting. Good chairpersons are made, not born.

## Summary

In this chapter, we have tried to do two things. First, we have made a number of comments about lay

speaking as a kind of art of persuasion. We have explored some of the persuasive effects of content, organization, style, and delivery. Second, we have made more specific comments about four kinds of lay speaking experiences: reading, individual speaking, participation in informal groups, and finally participation in large, formal meetings.

We hope that this information, much of which you know already, can start you on your way to more effective group participation within the church. But please remember that it is only a start. If you are to be an effective, persuasive lay speaker, most of the work is up to you. In this connection, please allow us to repeat an old, old story. A violinist was once lost on the streets of New York City. Finally, sighting a policeman, he asked directions.

"How do I get to Carnegie Hall?" he asked.

"Practice," said the policeman.

That is how you will become an effective lay

speaker—not by reading this chapter or the rest of the book, not by attending the meetings that are part of your certification requirement, but by practicing.

## Resources

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# EXPRESSING YOUR FAITH

Richard W. Harrington

## What Is Faith?

In this chapter, the word "faith" will be used in two ways—first, to describe what happens to us when, confronted by God's gracious love shown through Christ, we accept him as Lord and Savior. Faith is what we possess when we trust God so completely that we willingly place our lives in his hands. Then, second, and this must be seen as an outgrowth of the first, "faith" refers to beliefs—those principles of understanding which grow out of our basic encounter with God in Christ.

It must be a basic assumption that those who are seeking to be credentialed as lay speakers in the Church have had an encounter with God in Christ. They have accepted Christ as their Savior and Lord, and are willing to witness to that aspect of their faith. However, it cannot be assumed all such people have developed their faith understanding into a "confession of faith" so that they can communicate to others their beliefs about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the human person, the church, etc.

We know people who often say, "I know what I believe; I just can't put it into words." A lay speaker is called to put it into words.

## You and Your Faith

"Me—a theologian? You've got to be kidding!" That response came from a woman lying in a hospital bed one day. She indicated she believed in God and in Jesus, but didn't pretend to understand "all that theological stuff." The truth is that she is a theologian.

The word "theology" comes from a combination of the Greek words "*theos*," meaning "god," and "*legein*," meaning "to speak." Thus, one who has knowledge of God, and speaks that knowledge, is a theologian.

Lay speakers are theologians. In expressing their faith in God, and in sharing the content of their faith (their knowledge of God), they are, and always should be, speaking theologically.

A lay speaker ought to be entirely familiar and conversant with Part II of our *Book of Discipline*, entitled "Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements and the General Rules." Included as landmark documents in our history are both the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church. In addition, however, there is a statement which is applied to The United Methodist Church in this day and is entitled "Our Theological Task: The Gospel in a New Age."

This entire section affirms the principle of pluralism which exists within our Church; that is, that there exist side by side in every pew of United Methodism persons of diverse opinion as to the specifics of our faith, but who, in general, make common affirmation of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the human person, etc.

This section completes a commentary on the central teachings of our faith, which builds on two principles stated in the section on historical background. They are: First, that although the Confession and Articles are included in the total statement, they "are not to be regarded as positive, juridical norms for doctrine,

demanding unqualified assent on pain of excommunication." This means that United Methodism is not doctrinaire, that it does not demand of all its people an affirmation of one set of doctrinal definitions.

The second principle is that of the urgent need within our Church for "doctrinal reinvigoration for the sake of authentic renewal." The United Methodist Church believes there must be a continual process of theologizing within local congregations and throughout the structures of the whole Church. Only in this way can we keep in touch with the rapid cultural, social, and political changes which affect our methods of reflection and thus involve us all in authentic renewal.

Therefore, within our total church, we affirm the principle of pluralism, recognizing that persons with a variety of attitudes toward specific statements of doctrine can live, worship, pray, and act together under the Lordship of Christ.

A cardinal principle of faith living is that faith engenders faith. Lay speakers who share faith will find their own faith-capacity increasing also. When John Wesley was disheartened over his own seeming lack of faith and confessed this to Peter Bohler, the Moravian leader, Bohler told him, "Preach faith until you have faith, and then because you have faith, you will preach faith." Peter Bohler knew what many have learned—sound preaching of faith requires talking with other people about faith, and reading of faith and the faithfulness of the saints. By so doing, one's own faith is enhanced immeasurably. Thus, a lay speaker ought to spend time talking with others about faith, and reading accounts of the faith of others, especially those whose faith life has been outstanding.

Most often, one's faith grows in direct proportion to one's faithfulness. This means faithfulness in studying the Bible, faithfulness in praying, faithfulness in listening to faith stories of others, faithfulness in giving of love and concern after the example of Jesus, and faithfulness in acting for God.

### What About God?

Christians hold a firm belief in God. We have affirmed over and over the traditional descriptions of God inherited from our Jewish ancestors. Briefly, they are:

1. *God is Creator.* The Nicene Creed affirms God as "maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." In the centuries of Christian history, there has been much discussion (and often dissension) about the exact nature of Creation, its relative goodness and badness, and whether it took place almost instantaneously (in six actual twenty-four-hour days) or over a much longer period of time, as scientific evidence indicates. Even today, these issues might still touch sensitive nerves for some people. Generally, United Methodists hold that, although

arguments over the time span may interest some, the critical belief about Creation is God's presence in it, and, therefore, its goodness.

2. *God is Judge.* Almost every person who believes in God holds a view of a final judgment, at which God will be the judge. Some Christians see this as a kind of general courtroom scene, with every person from all time being brought before God individually and being tried, judged, and rewarded with heaven or punished in hell. On the other end of the belief spectrum are those who see God's judgment as ongoing, a continuous process which is both individual and collective. Judgment here is experienced by the individual through an awareness of God's inner presence in Christian conscience, and by the community through the collective consciousness of God's activity in all Christian people.

3. *God is Redeemer.* In the religion of Israel, God redeemed his people again and again. They often turned away from God, and, in doing so, brought all sorts of trouble upon themselves. Then, when they repented and sought God's forgiveness and favor, they were redeemed. With the coming of Christ, God's redeeming activity is centered in his life and ministry, his death and resurrection.

4. *God is Holy.* Orthodox theologians have often held forth holiness as the primary attribute of God, and there is a common affirmation of this belief throughout Christianity. It was received by early Christians as part of the legacy of Judaism. Today, all Christian communities have symbols in architecture and practices in worship which underline God's holiness. Note the third stanza of our treasured hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy": "Only Thou art holy; there is none beside thee, Perfect in power, in love, and purity."

5. *God is Love.* Although Judaism affirmed God's love, it is from the life and teachings of Jesus that Christians have come to uphold love as the overarching characteristic of God. Jesus called God "Father." In doing so, he exhibited such a closeness to God that it could only be described as a relationship between parent and child, a relationship of deep love and trust, of great caring and concern.

This emphasis in the life of Jesus has a dynamic effect upon our belief in God as well, because God's total activity, particularly his judgment, has to be understood in light of his great forgiving love for humanity. God's love is a seeking love; its very nature is such that it moves us toward God. An anonymous poet has said:

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew  
He moved my soul to seek him, seeking me;  
It was not I who found, O Savior true;  
No! I was found of thee.

The writer of I John states it clearly and simply: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us." Christians, in whatever theologizing they do, must

always deal meaningfully and honestly with a God who was seen by Jesus as a loving parent.

### Looking at Jesus

There is a difference in *knowing about* Jesus, and *accepting* him as the Christ.

Jesus was born into a rather obscure culture, quite unimportant to most of the world. As a human person, his impact would not turn the heads of much of the human race. However, his relationship to God, a unique responsiveness unmatched anywhere in history, and his giving of himself to humankind "even unto death," is that in which he becomes for all of us the Christ, the Savior of the world.

It is the resurrection of Christ which gives Christians a special conviction about him. In fact, without the Resurrection and the Easter experience, the rest of Jesus' life becomes far less significant. With it, his birth splits history. His life becomes the hope and promise for the world.

Accepting Christ does involve knowing about Jesus. Expressing our faith involves sharing many objective facts about his life and teaching. As we share these, their meaning and the reality of the Resurrection cause them to become the basis of faith.

We must tell the story of his birth because that is the beginning of our identification with him. He was born! That made him human, a person who could know and understand the needs, cares, and fears of people, and who could celebrate with them in their moments of exhilaration and joy.

We must share the glimpse we have of his boyhood. His visit to the temple at age twelve and his later attitudes toward his mother bespeak a fine home, sensitive and loving parents, and disciplined training in the faith of his people. His ability to talk intelligently and meaningfully with the priests in the temple underscores both his religious training and the ease with which he related to people.

We must share his temptation and baptism. His temptation—he, too, had to wrestle with right and wrong. "To follow God or not to follow God"—that was the question for Jesus, as it is for us.

His baptism—a symbol that he was leaving selfishness behind and giving his life in total response to God.

We must share his ministry. The popularity of Jesus was mainly due to his identifying with the poor and powerless people. He began his ministry by going to the synagogue in his hometown. There he opened the scriptures and read from the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

He then announced to the priests: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus' message to the people: "Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . those who mourn . . . those who are persecuted. Love God; love your neighbor. Ask and you shall receive. God loved the world so much, he gave his son. . . ."

His healing? Again, it was given to those in the masses who were neglected by others. The man at the pool of Bethesda who had been sick for thirty-eight years? Tradition was that the first person into the pool when the waters were troubled would be healed, but no one would help him into the water. Jesus was immediately aware of his plight and healed him. The lepers? These were the most cast-off persons in society, and Jesus dared to walk among them and to touch them.

We must share his difficulty with the religious leaders and civil authorities. Of all the people in the community, it would seem that the religious leaders would have understood and supported Jesus' ministry, but he committed the unpardonable sin—he became popular. Popularity is inevitable whenever a person gives genuine concern and caring to the common people. This is what caused Jesus to come into conflict with the authorities. He was a threat to the religious leaders because he taught the people a simple, honest gospel, emphasizing a relationship to God not dependent upon religious gyrations and sacrifices as prescribed by the priests. He was a threat to government leaders because he cared very much for the welfare of the people. Consequently, the religious and civil leaders conspired to kill him.

We must share his death. Betrayal by one of his closest friends and followers, the attempt by Pontius Pilate to save him, the final decision left to the rabble who infested the Jerusalem streets in the middle of the night, the cry that echoes through the centuries—"Crucify him!"—until the words are canceled by the fervent prayer on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." To the end, love and concern for others, even for those who killed him.

And his resurrection? We must share that. How disheartened his disciples were after his death. In fact, before Jesus died, Peter—the Rock—denied he even knew him. How disappointed they were that events had not worked out as they had dreamed! Their hopes for a kingdom had been shattered. What could possibly bring them out from behind doors where they hid locked in fear for their lives? What could possibly transform this disheartened lot into the small but mighty army of God, which marched forth to bring salvation to the world?

Nothing short of the Resurrection, our faith maintains! Nothing short of that miracle could change the group of defeated followers into bold leaders,

witnesses for Christ, who led a revolution that changed the course of history.

And therein, our *knowing about* Jesus, and sharing that with others, becomes our *knowing* Jesus and *accepting* him as the Christ. Through the resurrection experience in our lives, facts become faith; and to that—the resurrection and our faith—we must witness!

### God in Christ

How difficult it is to allow Jesus to be Jesus. He witnessed so dynamically to God's presence within him—in his teaching, in his care and concern, in his acting out of his faith—that people came to understand him as actually being God.

It ought not to be hard for us to understand this. The presence of the United States is intertwined with the person of our president. The presence of England is epitomized in her reigning monarch. It should not be difficult to understand that one who lived so close to God, who responded so completely to God's will, who in every thought, word, and action attempted to live out God's presence within him, should become so identified with God that people thought of him as God.

Jesus' uniqueness in his response to God's will was so singular that his work and God's work are seen as one and the same—God working through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection to save humankind from sin and death.

This is not an objective fact, but rather a matter of faith. God is God, and must never be hailed as less. The hope for our full response to God lies in the possibility of our completely identifying with Jesus. There is not a great deal of hope that we might follow the example of Jesus if he was not truly "born in the likeness of men." Therefore, our possibility for complete dedication lies in our allowing Jesus to be Jesus who, through our knowledge of his life, death, and resurrection, becomes again and again the Christ of our faith. It is really in and through this that we can grasp the meaning of the phrase "God in Christ" and find our hope for a fuller commitment to God in us.

### The Holy Spirit—God in Us

Throughout history, the person and presence of the Holy Spirit has been one of the most difficult concepts for people to understand and believe. The difficulty remains in our contemporary setting.

During the past few years there has been, throughout the Christian world, a resurgence of emphasis on the Holy Spirit and an interest in how the Holy Spirit operates in the lives of individuals and in the life of the church.

One of the difficulties is that there is no way of testing the experience of an individual to determine if it is an encounter with the Holy Spirit.

We have enough scientific data about psychological motivation to know that nearly identical experiences can be had by two people, one of whom will credit some psychological stimulus, the other claiming the inspiration or gift of the Holy Spirit. Obviously, this causes confusion. It does underline, however, the critical role of the church, both in interpreting activities of the Holy Spirit throughout its history and in helping people to identify and understand their own experiences.

Our day is not unique. In the second century A.D., a man named Montanus claimed to be the promised "Comforter," or Holy Spirit. There is a difference only in degree between one who claims to be the Holy Spirit and one who claims that what he or she believes, teaches, and practices is inspired by, or a gift from, the Holy Spirit.

Scripture makes one thing very clear regarding the Holy Spirit—it is a corporate experience. It is of the church. It takes place within the community of faith and is given credence only within the gathered community, which is the church. Therefore, there should never be a question as to the right of the church to hear about, to determine credibility of, and to develop guidelines for interpreting experiences of the Holy Spirit. Yet it is the responsibility of the Church to be open to the influence of the Holy Spirit, to prepare people to receive such gifts, and to utilize those who thus receive.

In order to deal responsibly with concerns about the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church, one must also include a discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity—the belief in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Early Christian history suggests this doctrine was extremely problematic from the beginning, and it is clear that the problem has still not been resolved to the satisfaction of all Christians.

During his ministry, Jesus promised his followers that after his departure, another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would come to be with them (John 14). After the crucifixion, there occurred the experience which Christians refer to as Pentecost.

Pentecost is a Jewish feast, celebrated fifty days after the second day of Passover. It was during this time that a group of Jesus' followers, perhaps one hundred or so, met together, and there came upon them what they called the "Holy Spirit." Many Christians look upon this event as the birth of the church, and have felt the experience—the receiving of the Holy Spirit—to be an essential feature of their life and faith.

What happened in the reality of that experience we may never be able to state for certain, but we can state emphatically that those Christians who were gathered together shared a common experience which dramatically affected their lives, and which became a unifying factor for the early church. From that time, they moved out into the world with new power to

undergird their conviction that Jesus was Lord. Their experience tied them, in memory, back to the time when Jesus walked with them, and many of the things he taught them took on new and vibrant meaning. His promise of a Comforter had been fulfilled in their presence, and, for them, this underscored his claim to power over death. Although small in number, they were ready to march forth to conquer the world for Christ, and they did!

It is likely that many controversies would have been avoided if Christians had been satisfied to live under the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than seeking to define the matter. However, it seems not to be the nature of the human mind to accept such manifestations without trying to philosophize or theologize about them. Undoubtedly, the first attempt at formulating a doctrine of the Holy Spirit took place when one of those present at the Pentecost experience tried to share it with a friend.

Out of that experience, the early Christians were moved to explain the relationship between God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. For them, God remained one, and they called him "Father" as many Jews did. However, their encounter with Jesus of Nazareth had been so profoundly God-like that they came to believe that in Jesus they had seen God, that Jesus was God become flesh. Likewise, they believed the newfound power at work in their lives was also God.

At the same time, they had to grapple with the central affirmation of their faith: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Important to their existence together was their affirmation of monotheism—belief in one, and only one, God! Yet, their experience of Jesus and the Holy Spirit was real, and it became important to identify this with God.

Words have never been adequate to explain the experience of the early Christians which brought about their belief in God as *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. Great leaders of the early church, such as Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, helped to clarify the relationship; but the experiences of Christ and the Holy Spirit were too novel to be captured in words. Although many attempts have been made to define the Trinity, in the final analysis both the relationship and the experience are to be received, not as axioms to be proved by logic, but as mysteries accepted in faith.

#### You Are a Person of God, Too!

The most profound fact about Jesus is that people can identify with him. He was a person, a human person. He knew what it was like to laugh and to cry, to feel good and to hurt, to celebrate and to grieve. Hunger affected him as it affects us. His struggle with himself, his grappling with selfish desire was as real as our struggles with the temptations of today. He

enjoyed life fully and had no more desire to die than we do.

The key to Jesus' personhood, the very secret to his whole character, was in his giving of himself in total response to the will of God, as he knew it and demonstrated it in his life. The meaning of the life and ministry of Jesus lies in showing us the possibility of a fully dedicated life, a response to the presence of God within us that is full and complete.

The key to our personhood is in our willingness to follow his example. There is no magic formula, no easy diagram to follow, and no promise of popularity or reward; we must remember that Jesus' reward for faithfulness to God was death on the Cross. However, when we begin to connect our faithfulness to God with the possible good it produces for our sisters and brothers, then the trek into faith, no matter how difficult, is worth the cost of discipleship.

Jesus' example in his faithfulness says to each of us, "You are a person of God, too." Over and over in his message, Jesus challenges us to be whole human persons, and he holds forth the possibility that we can give ourselves in full response to God as well.

It is important to understand what it means to be human persons, created by God in his image. Basically, the doctrine of the human person begins with how one sees the nature of the human person; it is a question of goodness and badness, exemplary living or sin, and whether either is dominant in human life.

Conservative theology has generally held that the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden account of Creation has been inherited in the flesh by every person. Thus, every person is born with the taint of that original sin and therefore stands in need of being saved. This view has a very simple description of salvation: even though Adam and Eve sinned (turned their backs on God), God still loves them (and their offspring through the generations). Because of this great love, God enters human history by causing a young woman to conceive and give birth to a son—his Son.

This son, Jesus, the product of a divine-human relationship, is both divine and human. He acts out his human nature by completely identifying with the people of his day, demonstrating to them the kind of right relationship with God which constitutes the "good life," being saved. When Jesus is crucified on the Cross of Calvary, God accepts his sacrifice—really the sacrificing of God—as the payment, the atonement for sin for all time. The miracle of salvation is through the blood of Christ, God having loved humankind enough to enter human history, to give of his life, to suffer and die that people might be saved from their sin. Three days after Jesus' death, God raised him from the grave, demonstrating his power over sin and death. Salvation, then, carries with it the promise of everlasting life in heaven in the presence of God. This

salvation is free. It is a gift from a gracious and loving God, and all a person has to do is repent of past sin and accept the gift. The acceptance of God's saving grace leads one to a new life, one that is pleasing in God's sight.

It is more difficult to define the theology of the human person from a liberal perspective, because it varies from person to person, particularly with regard to the "how" of salvation. Generally, however, there is some agreement on the "why" of it, and it is this question which affects our immediate concern—the doctrine of human personhood.

Liberal theology would accept the event of Adam and Eve's downfall as being the prototype for all human experience. People do not inherit original sin as a birthright, but each person is born with the possibilities of sinning or of not sinning. The world of human experience subjects one over and over to influences both good and evil, and every person has the potential for being swayed by both.

Liberal theology would be reluctant to suggest that anyone is without sin, but rather would say that sin is a matter of degree. The emphasis is on the true worth of the human person as being that unique value shown to us in Jesus. He is the model, the guideline, the possibility for all of God's children.

A person can choose either extreme—accepting God or rejecting God, living responsibly or living irresponsibly. However, most people follow neither extreme; rather they fall into a pattern somewhere in between—sometimes faithful, sometimes unfaithful. Salvation is giving oneself to God's spirit, seeking to live as though always in God's presence. It is accepting God's loving presence and experiencing, therefore, the fulfillment of the personhood given us by God.

The decision "for God" is not once and for all; it is continuous and dynamic. Each moment of life is laden with decision, and those who accept God's love as seen

in Christ are those who, in every situation, attempt to make the right choice.

Personhood is tied meaningfully to the one who walked the shores of Galilee, who went to a wedding, who gave hope to the hopeless, who loved beyond measure, and who invited his followers to do even greater things. Jesus was a person of God; those who accept his call to discipleship are persons of God too.

### Expressing Your Faith

We have presented in this chapter an approach to an understanding of the Christian faith in the context of the call to ministry that comes to all baptized and confirmed Christians. As lay speakers, you are called to share your faith persuasively with others. This means using the tools of persuasion and the art of communication so that you can be an effective witness to the Christian faith through spoken communication. It also means a continuing task of clarifying and developing your understanding of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, and the several other doctrinal areas. In your witnessing you must be able to share the implications of God's action and the teachings of Jesus for the lives of persons and for the society in which we live.

Expressing your faith calls for practice—taking every opportunity to develop your skills through doing. The opportunities are as varied as the service opportunities open to you as a lay speaker. The challenge is the challenge of Jesus to "be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

### Resources

Colaw, Emerson. *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian. Tidings*, 1972.  
*Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements*, reprint of Part II of the *Book of Discipline*. Graded Press, 1972.  
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## USING AND INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

Richard W. Harrington

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to assist the potential lay speaker in understanding the history and development of the Bible and to identify methods and tools for using and interpreting the scriptures.

There are those who hold the Bible in such wonder that they attempt to use it magically. When I was very young, I remember hearing an elderly man describing his use of the Bible. He said that no matter what problem or condition he faced, all he had to do was hold his Bible in one hand, let it fall open to any page that chance dictated, place the index finger of his

other hand at any point on the page, and there would be his answer. Many of us who listened to this man tried that method, only to give up in frustrated failure. Yet it was that man's conviction that the method always worked for him and that God always guided his finger to the correct answer. I recall feeling despair for a time that either God did not care about me or that my faith was weak.

Much later, in a Bible study class, a pastor pointed out that God gave us not only the Bible, but understanding and intelligence as well; that it was part of God's plan for us to use these gifts when we pick up our Bibles. To take the magical approach is to assume

that God has nothing better to do than wait around to guide our hands when our Bibles fall open and to point our fingers. Moreover, this is to misuse both God's Word and the human resources God has given us.

Our Wesleyan heritage calls us to a responsible use of the Bible, an approach which emphasizes an understanding of its formation and history, its meaning in its own day, and its relevance for the day in which we now live.

The doctrinal principles of our Church include the following statement of attitude toward scripture (*The Book of Discipline*, 1976, p. 78):

United Methodists share with all other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and guideline for doctrine. The Bible is the deposit of a unique testimony to God's self-disclosures: in the world's creation, redemption and final fulfillment; in Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God's Word; in the Holy Spirit's constant activity in the dramas of history. It is the primitive source of the memories, images, and hopes by which the Christian community came into existence and that still confirm and nourish its faith and understanding. Christian doctrine has been formed, consciously and unconsciously, from metaphors and themes the origins of which are biblical.

As we immerse ourselves in the biblical testimony, as we open our minds and hearts to the Word of God through the words of persons inspired by the Holy Spirit, faith is born and nourished, our understanding deepens and develops, and both the core of faith and the range of our theological opinions are expanded and enriched.

As the constitutive witness to God's self-revelation, Scripture is rightly read and understood within the believing community and its interpretation is informed by the light of that community. Scripture texts are rightly interpreted in the light of their place in the Bible as a whole, as this is illuminated by scholarly inquiry and personal insight. The meaning of each text is best understood when its original intention and significance have been grasped. From this careful handling of Scripture, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, believers may appropriately apply the truth to the circumstances of their own time and place.

Our conviction, then, as United Methodists, is:

1. That sound Christian doctrine has its basis in scripture.
2. That faith is born, nourished, and expanded as believers open themselves to the words of the scriptures.
3. That the right understanding of scripture takes place within the life of the church.
4. That careful and scholarly study of scripture, with a conscious awareness of doing so in the presence of the Holy Spirit, helps believers to apply biblical truth to their own time and place.

### The Bible in the Making

The magical, untutored approach to the Bible's history often suggests that somehow God reached out his hand and—presto—the Bible was instantly and completely written. In a sense, there is truth to that, but only if we realize that the process spanned many

years and included many people as agents of God's hand, because the various books of the Bible were written over a period of thirteen hundred years by many, many people.

The Bible is, quite literally, a book of books. There are 66 books in all—39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.

The words of law, history, poetry, and prophecy contained in the Old Testament began with an oral tradition. For many years, perhaps centuries, these words were passed from person to person, generation to generation, by word of mouth. The peoples of the area we know today as the Near East and Middle East were largely nomadic, and we can imagine that much of what we now accept and revere as scripture began and continued as stories, poetry, and songs around family and village campfires. It was probably not until 1100–1000 B.C. that some of this oral tradition was written down.

Also, we must not suppose the entire text of any book came from a single source and was agreed upon as being inspired at the time it was first recorded. Biblical scholars, who have spent many years studying early texts, have identified several sources within one book. This is particularly true of the Old Testament. Space does not permit a lengthy explanation of this here, but books listed in the attached bibliography will provide the serious lay speaker with a more complete explanation. Let it suffice here to provide the following example.

Most people read the Genesis report of Creation as one story. Yet careful reading reveals there are two separate accounts, obviously coming from different sources as they contain different information and terms. In the first account (Genesis 1:1–2:4a), God is called Elohim, which in English is translated as "God." In the second account (Genesis 2:4b–25), God is called Yahweh or Jehovah, which we translate as "Lord." Also, in the first story, humankind was created male and female (1:26–27) after the creation of the plants and animals (1:20–25); while, according to the second account, man was created first (2:7), then the trees (2:9), then the animals (2:19), and finally woman (2:21–22).

To recognize these differences in no way detracts from the inspiration of scripture. What is evident is that the Bible, although not a scientific explanation of Creation, is a book which emphasizes over and over again the history of God's revelations and his relationships to us. It is primarily a book of faith, a collection of writings by people inspired by the presence of God in their lives.

It will be helpful to introduce here the word "canon." The canon of scripture is that group of religious writings, or books, which has been accepted by the church as its Bible, its rule of faith. The word "canon" comes from the Semitic word "kaneh," which means reed. In early times, a straight reed was used as

a ruler to draw a straight line. However, the meaning of "canon" goes beyond the simple explanation and becomes a rule for living a straight life; thus, it is used to describe the church's list of authoritative books.

How did a book or piece of writing become part of the canon? It had to be popular. As difficult as it was to reproduce writings in biblical times (and even up to the invention of movable type in the fifteenth century A.D.), any literature which survived simply had to be popular. Considering the painstaking and expensive labor of copying on papyrus, sheepskin, or parchment, it is not difficult to understand that no literary work was likely to survive unless it attracted readers. Thus, those books finally canonized had withstood the test of popularity.

Establishing a book as a part of the New Testament canon required apostolic authorship, or at least the authorship of an apostolic-type person. The real criterion, however, for establishing a book as canonical was the test of time as to its inspiration, authority, and use.

The books of the Bible became part of the canon very gradually. The earliest book to be accepted, Deuteronomy, was found in the temple of Solomon in 621 B.C. and was declared "the Word of God" by a woman named Huldah. The other four books of the Pentateuch<sup>1</sup> were not added to the canon until 400 B.C.

The Old Testament canon was not completed until A.D. 90, which is actually after some of the New Testament letters and three of the Gospels had been written. The early Christians adopted the Jewish canon as their own.

Acceptance of New Testament books as scripture also took place over a long period of time. The definition of the New Testament canon actually took place in reaction to the teachings and leadings of those people the church had declared as heretics.

The earliest heresy was led by Marcion, a wealthy ship owner, and is labeled "gnosticism," a word derived from the Greek "gnostikos," pertaining to knowledge. The gnostics held that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are not one and the same; that the Old Testament is the book of an ignorant, hostile God, while the God of the New Testament is the true God of spirit. This teaching meant that New Testament passages which even referred to the God of the Old Testament could not be used. One has only to reflect upon the content of the New Testament to realize a majority of the passages therein would be eliminated by such a belief.

The Marcion heresy, forced the church to make up its mind about the validity of the Old Testament for Christian thought, and about which books ought to be included in the New Testament. The church did affirm the Old Testament and began to consider the

formation of the New Testament canon. By the end of the second century A.D., there was a list of New Testament books, indicating the Bible was moving seriously toward its final form.

A man named Montanus appeared late in the second century and claimed to be the Holy Spirit, the Comforter promised in John's Gospel; the Spirit who would come to lead Jesus' followers to the full truth. Montanus held that the church standards had deteriorated and that he was the fulfillment of Jesus' words in John 16:12-14:

I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Obviously, this created a real problem for the church. If the claim of Montanus was honored, the church left itself open to any and all who would come forth in the future making such demands. Yet many people were reluctant to declare an end to the age which had produced holy writings worthy of being included in the canon.

The church dealt with Montanus by declaring the days of revelation were ended, that all of the sacred books had been written. The canon was closed.

Those who opposed this action felt the church was closing off the activity of the Holy Spirit and said so. For example, Tertullian held that the church had driven the Holy Spirit into a book. The church, on the other hand, held that in the earlier days the influence of the Holy Spirit led people to write sacred books, but that in later days the Holy Spirit guided people into understanding so they might interpret and apply what had been written.

The first record showing the list of New Testament books as we now have them is found in the Easter letter of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, to his people in A.D. 367. Thus the entire canon of the New Testament was completed before the beginning of the fifth century.

### The "Word" of God

Often in our life in the church we use terms such as "the Word of God" or "God's Word," or simply "the Word." One statement in the ordination service of our Church says: "Take thou authority to read the Holy Scriptures in the Church of God, and to preach the Word. Amen."

What is meant by the Word? Historically, the Word of God meant the way in which God makes his will known to the human community. During the period of oral tradition, it was undoubtedly through holy people, those considered religious leaders of the community, that God's Word became known. The

<sup>1</sup> The Pentateuch is the first five books of the Old Testament, the first and most important section of the Hebrew Bible.

words spoken by such people probably were considered holy; that is, *of God or from God*.

It is likely that, with the development of writing, such "holy" words became known as *the holy word* and then evolved to *Word*. In so doing, the simple use of "Word" assumed that God's presence was there and that his will for the person or community was conveyed therein.

At this point, let us return to the meaning of the written word. There are many people who hold tenaciously to the view that the Bible was, literally, written by God's hand; that God reached down from heaven and actually guided every movement of the writer's hand. Those who hold this view need to seriously grapple with the broader meaning of God's giving to his human children knowledge and understanding, and a spirit with which to respond to his presence.

"Word presence" is a concept of inspiration helpful in recognizing both God's presence in the writing of scripture and God's granting of freedom to his people. Word presence is that special act of revelation that occurs when one is totally immersed in a consciousness of God's presence and seeks to respond completely to that presence in being a part of God's communication to the world. Such a person writes in an attitude of holy reverence, aware of attempting to communicate God's mind and God's will to the world. Every word is placed on the page with a conscious awareness of its being done in the presence of God.

Such a view suggests divine inspiration at its very highest—God communicating to the world through the noblest intention of his creation, speaking his Word through people receptive to his Word, who are giving themselves consciously to the task of speaking and writing that Word to the world.

#### From Generation to Generation

Originally, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. During the third century B.C., a Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, was made, and this was in common use during Jesus' time.

The Old Latin translation appeared in the second century A.D. The translation of its Old Testament was not from the original Hebrew, but from the Septuagint translation. Later, the Old Latin version was revised by Jerome as the Vulgate or Latin vernacular, the Latin of the common people. It was completed by A.D. 404 and became the Bible of Western Christianity for a thousand years.

As the power of the papacy grew, the Bible fell into general disuse, and much of its importance was replaced by edicts and dogmas of popes and councils. Eventually, the situation reached the point that the church allowed only the Vulgate translation of the Bible to be used. Use of any other version or

translation was prohibited, and violators suffered extreme punishment, even death.

So it was that people had to risk their lives in order to translate Scripture into the common language of the people. Perhaps the most celebrated example was that of William Tyndale, an English scholar and priest, in the early sixteenth century, who risked persecution and death by the church in his quest to make the Bible available to every plowman in a language he could read. He was forced to leave England, and went to the Continent to continue his work of translating the Scripture.

For many years he was successful in eluding those who sought to stop him, but he was finally lured out of hiding under false pretenses and arrested for heresy. He was tried, condemned, removed from the priesthood, strangled, and his body burned.

Gradually, however, the right of the people to have the Scriptures written in their own language was approved and accepted, and many translations did appear.

A cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation was the insistence that Scriptures were the primary source of inspiration and guidance for Christians, and that individual Christians not only had the right to have the Scriptures in their own language, but could interpret them as well. During the time Martin Luther was hiding from church authorities in the castle of Wartburg, he translated the New Testament from Greek into German. In his later years, he translated the Old Testament as well, and worked for the remainder of his life to perfect his German Bible.

The most used and most influential translation until recently was the King James Version, authorized by James I in 1604 and completed and presented in 1611. This has also been called the Authorized Version and is the basis for both the English Revised Version (New Testament in 1881; Old Testament in 1885) and the American Standard Version (1901).

#### The Bible Today

The literary excellence and beauty of the King James Version made it a favorite of the people even into the twentieth century. Other translations have appeared, such as the Weymouth, Moffatt, and Goodspeed translations. Although they are scholarly and have been used in Bible study, particularly in preparation of candidates for the ordained ministry, they have not been widely used by lay people in the life of the church.

The first translation to really challenge the King James Version for common use is the Revised Standard Version. It is not a new translation, but rather a revision of the King James and American Revised Versions completed in 1952.

Within the past few years, the demand to have scripture in clear, understandable, modern language

has produced literally dozens of translations and, more recently, paraphrases of the Bible.

A translation is an attempt to be entirely faithful to the language of a former translation, and is most often accomplished by groups of language scholars who pool their resources and opinions so that the final product has wide acceptance. A paraphrase is an attempt to catch the meaning of a particular passage without the limitations of phrase-for-phrase translation from one language to another.

Many people would use the guideline of interpretation as the major difference between the two, holding that a translation attempts to be faithful to the wording of the original text, whereas a paraphrase restates the meaning in another form.

The New English Bible and the Jerusalem Bible are perhaps the most scholarly works of recent date while The Good News Bible and The Living Bible are examples of popular paraphrases.

One of the major reasons for continuous translating of the Scriptures is change in the meaning of words. Such change has greatly accelerated with modern methods of communication. My teen-age children recently began using the word "tough" to describe anything they considered very nice. A new car, dress, or bicycle was "tough." The description "tough" extended to people as well. In my youth, if someone said, "John is a tough guy," we understood it to mean, "Don't start a fight with John; he's a mean, strong guy!" To my teen-agers, John's being "tough" simply meant he was a nice person.

The meanings of more than three hundred words in the King James Version had changed enough to justify using a different word in the Revised Standard Version. A recent report indicates there are over fifty words in the Revised Standard Version whose meaning has changed and which need to be updated in future editions.

### Using the Bible Responsibly

Some people hold the belief that responsible scholarship is the enemy of the Bible, that word study distorts the meaning of scripture, that research and study of early history which affects understanding of scripture verges on heresy, and that discoveries of facts about biblical characters detract rather than add to their witness of faith.

Not so! If early Christians, and Bible scholars throughout history, had held such a view, we would still be using an Old Testament written in Hebrew and a New Testament written in Greek.

Today, more than ever, one who desires to act as a lay speaker in the church must learn the responsible use of the Bible and be disciplined in specific steps to better understanding. It is only after such preparation that one can rightfully communicate the Bible as God's Word to others.

There are three words that are helpful at this point: *exegesis, exposition, application.*

*Exegesis* is a Greek word meaning "to interpret." Generally, in biblical interpretation, to exegete is to lay bare the essential meaning of a passage for the age or time of its original writing. For example, in reading Paul's words in I Corinthians 14:33-34: "As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they . . . should be subordinate, as even the law says," it is important to understand the entire context of what Paul said. It is necessary to look at the culture, the Jewish religious customs, Paul's own attitude toward women and its seeming lack of harmony with the spirit of Jesus' teaching. With a fuller understanding of the circumstances surrounding the writing, we avoid irresponsible use of a text.

*Exposition* refers to the stating of eternal truth laid bare by the particular verse. Often this is shown in writing by reference to the many occasions throughout history when that truth has applied.

*Application* is just what the word implies—the application of the eternal truth of the passage to the contemporary situation, the setting in which people live out their lives in the present age.

The use of these three methods—whereby one discovers the meaning of a passage for the time when it was written, understands how its central truth has been meaningful throughout history, and carefully applies that truth to life today—will help one escape the pitfall of "proof-texting." Proof-texting takes place when one has an idea or concept to expound or promote, and searches the Scripture to find a text which supports or "proves" it.

Proper use of the Bible reverses this procedure. One goes first to the Word of God, reads, studies, meditates, allows the Word to speak, and then brings to the idea or concept historical and contemporary illustrations to show how the Bible speaks relevantly to God's people.

United Methodism applies four criteria to its system of beliefs and organization. They are scripture, tradition, experience, and reason. It is important here to underscore that the *first* guideline for United Methodists is scripture—and, it can be added, scripture used responsibly!

*Studying the Bible.* There is no substitute for disciplined reading of the Scriptures. When people confront me with the question, "Don't you ever run out of sermon ideas?" my answer is simply, "Not as long as I keep reading my Bible." These rules will help:

1. Read regularly—every day if possible.
2. Use a favorite translation, but keep one or two other translations handy to compare meanings. Illustration: Isaiah 14:13c RSV: "I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north." The NEB: "I will sit on the mountain where the gods meet in the far recesses of the north." It enlarges the meaning to know that when the writer speaks of the "mount of

assembly," it is "the mountain *where the gods meet*" and indicates something of the reverence held for this place.

3. Use a "plan" in Bible study. Of course, there are times when one should do random reading—simply opening the Bible to various places and browsing. However, the most inspirational and productive study takes place when the Bible is approached systematically. There are many Bible study guides available. One that is particularly useful is *The Bible and You*, by Edward P. Blair.

4. Keep paper and pencil nearby. Very few people have the ability to retain facts and ideas in their minds and then recall them at will. A regular recording of inspirational thoughts, cross references, and illustrations will greatly enrich both the process of preparation and the delivery of speeches, prayers, sermons, and study materials.

5. Do not hesitate to mark in your Bible. When I was young, someone led me to believe it was a sin to write notes in the Bible, and it took me a long time to get over that.

*Interpreting the Bible.* It is impossible to separate studying the Bible from interpreting it. In fact, it is impossible to read without interpreting. However, there are some specific aids to interpretation which make study of the Scriptures exciting. The following are three basic tools for interpreting:

1. *Concordance:* gives an alphabetical listing of principle words in the Bible. It is helpful in searching for specific verses, and also in conducting parallel studies. For example, if one does not know exactly where to find the story of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers, a quick glance into a concordance, under the word "sell" will help one locate the story in Genesis 37. Or, if one wishes to compare that incident with other examples of people being sold into servitude, simply check the other references under "sell" or "sold."

2. *Bible dictionary:* defines words in the Bible. Let us assume that one might be using a reference to the man who had been ill for thirty-eight years (John 5:2) who was at the pool of Bethesda in hope of being cured. The definition of "Bethesda" in the Bible Dictionary gives the meaning of the word as "house of mercy, or the flowing water," and gives a variety of other information which would add interest and meaning for the reader or for those who might be listening to a meditation or a sermon. An understanding of the meaning of a word or passage in the time it was written will also shed light on the meaning for our day.

3. *Bible commentary:* moves through the Bible, verse by verse, providing word study, historical information, and interpretative commentary by noted biblical scholars and theologians.

*Applying the Bible.* The witness of the Bible speaks to all of history. There is a timelessness to the wisdom, proverbs, psalms, and especially the teachings of Jesus and his followers in the New Testament.

One of the basic responsibilities of the lay speaker is to use and interpret the Bible. This is done as one leads study groups, teaches, gives meditations and supplies pulpits as well as in the day-to-day witnessing which is the responsibility of every Christian.

Regular discipline in studying and interpreting scripture will provide one with the knowledge and ability to apply the Bible to everyday living. To influence the faith of another person is a sobering responsibility, and must be entered into with deep prayer and profound preparation. When a person is reeling under the strain of a personal problem, or a community is facing a grave crisis, one trying to offer help must do more than "proof-text" the situation. Rather, one must offer loving concern and spiritual insight based on a careful understanding of God's Word for the particular situation.

#### Resources

##### *Concordances*

*Nelson's Complete Concordance to the Revised Standard Version Bible.* Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957.

*Nelson's Concise Concordance to the Revised Standard Version Bible.* Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1959.

*Strong's Concordance.* Abingdon.

##### *Dictionaries*

*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 volumes. Abingdon, 1962 and 1976.

*Miller, Madeleine S., and Miller, J. Lane. Harper's Bible Dictionary.* Harper, 1962.

##### *Commentaries*

*Buttrick, George A., ed. The Interpreter's Bible*, 12 volumes. Abingdon.

*Laymon, Charles M., ed. The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible.* Abingdon, 1971.

##### *Books About the Bible*

*Barclay, William. Introducing the Bible.* Abingdon, 1972.

*Blair, Edward P. The Bible and You.* Abingdon, 1953.  
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*Anderson, Bernhard W. Understanding the Old Testament.* Prentice-Hall, 1966.

*Kee, Howard Clark, and Young, Franklin W. Understanding the New Testament.* Prentice-Hall, 1965.

*Rahtjen, Bruce D. Biblical Truth and Modern Man.* Abingdon, 1968.

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# UNDERSTANDING AND PLANNING PUBLIC WORSHIP

Richard S. Smith

## Christian Worship: An Overview

Worship is central to the life of the Christian and to the life of the Christian community, the church. It is in worship that we discover who we are and whose we are. Worship is the soil in which our life is nurtured and from which spring all the other dimensions of the Christian life. The teaching, fellowship, service, witnessing, and social action of the individual Christian and of the Christian church must all be based in a vital and vibrant life of worship if they are to be effective.

Christian worship finds expression in two forms: as personal devotions and as the corporate worship of the community.

Personal devotions are the acts of worship participated in by individuals privately in their homes, in church buildings, in outdoor settings, or wherever they pause for prayer, Bible reading, and meditation. The beginnings of the practice of personal devotions are to be found in the offices (orders for service) developed for use at several times each day by the medieval church and in the Old and New Testament practices of personal withdrawal for periods of prayer, fasting, meditation, and renewal. Many Christians today testify to the importance of personal devotions as one of the disciplines of the Christian life.

The corporate worship of the community is worship in which members of the congregation come together in a common place to participate in common acts. Corporate worship is congregational worship; that is, it is worship in which the people participate together in prayer, praise, proclamation, affirmation, and response to the Word of God. Corporate worship is not composed of individual acts of personal devotion carried out in a common setting or place; if it is truly corporate worship, it is worship in which all participate together and before God celebrate the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The pattern for our nonsacramental worship services (that is, worship that does not include the sacrament of Holy Communion) is to be found in the synagogue service. The synagogue service was developed by the Jews during the period of exile following the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 587 B.C. Separated from their holy places and their priests, from their friends and country, the Jews developed the synagogue as a place of education and of worship. The synagogue service began as a time of reading and exposition of the traditions of the nation and the faith as recorded in the Scriptures. To this activity was added prayer and praise. The service became a recalling, recounting, and celebrating of what God

had done. Worship thus became a means of keeping alive in the people the memories, heritage, and faith of the fathers and the nation.

The synagogue service still provides the basic pattern for our nonsacramental services of worship. The content has changed only to extend the story of what God has done from the actions and covenants of the Old Testament to the action of God in Jesus Christ and the New Covenant of the New Testament. Today we do the same things by the same means as did the exile Jews: we celebrate our corporate history through scripture, prayer, song, and sermon. We recall together the events that make us the people of God, a distinctive and unique people among the peoples of the earth.

Though much of contemporary United Methodist worship is nonsacramental, we understand that sacramental worship is central to our worship life. The celebration of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion, is at the very heart of Christian worship. Any recalling or retelling of the story of our faith is incomplete without this act.

Holy Communion recalls the Last Supper of our Lord and his Disciples when bread and wine became symbols of his body and blood given in behalf of all. It also recalls the Resurrection appearances amid the gathering of early Christians, and the practice of joining in a common meal as a central act in their worship life. It also looks forward to Christ's coming in final victory and the heavenly feast. As such it is celebration—celebration of the victory of God in Jesus Christ over sin and death, and celebration of Christ's giving of himself to us as a redemptive gift, unmerited and undeserved.

There is good evidence that in the very earliest days of the church, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was a weekly act. It continued thus into the Middle Ages, and in some traditions continues to be celebrated weekly. In the years immediately before the Reformation, preaching was ignored. Even though the sacrament was the central act of worship, it was often performed by priests without the presence of the people. The liturgy was in a language unfamiliar to the people; effective participation by the people was impossible. For the people, the offices or acts of personal devotion had become the principal forms of worship.

The Reformers sought to restore preaching to a place of prominence in the life of the church and began the translation of the liturgy into the language of the people. So there came a renewed emphasis upon the centrality of both Word and sacrament in worship. Luther and Calvin believed that both

preaching and the Lord's Supper should be part of worship every Sunday. Wesley supported this emphasis, and encouraged a strong preaching ministry and the celebration of the Lord's Supper every Sunday wherever an ordained minister was present. His emphasis did not take hold in America, however; under the leadership of Asbury, emphasis was placed upon preaching and the class meeting, the proclamation of the Word, and the examination of the Christian's life.

As lay speakers, you will not be called upon to administer the sacraments; this role is reserved to the ordained ministers of our Church. You may be called upon to assist in these services, serving as a liturgist or assisting in the distribution of the elements. For this reason an understanding of the sacraments is important in your preparation for leading worship, and you are encouraged to do further reading and study in some of the resources listed at the end of this chapter.

As a lay speaker you may be called upon to assist in the planning or leadership of Sunday worship in your home congregation. You may be asked to plan and lead worship in your home or in other congregations during the absence of the pastor. In addition, you will have opportunity to plan and lead worship services in nursing homes, retirement homes, for meetings of groups, organizations, and classes in your home church, and on occasions such as retreats, workshops, and conferences. A thorough understanding of Christian worship is essential for you to effectively carry out your responsibilities. With this overview of Christian worship in our minds, we now want to address the specific question, What is worship? and then make some suggestions on the planning and leadership of worship.

### What Is Worship?

Worship is a celebration of the whole gospel of Jesus Christ! In worship we celebrate what God has done in Christ: we remember his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. We also recall the gift of the Holy Spirit, and God's continuing creative and redemptive activity in our midst. We celebrate the new covenant in Christ, and look forward to the final fulfillment of the promise of that covenant in the coming of the kingdom of God.

Worship is recollection and affirmation of who we are and whose we are: "But you are the chosen race, the King's priests, the holy nation, God's own people, chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God, who called you out of darkness into his own marvelous light. At one time you were not God's people, but now you are his people; at one time you did not know God's mercy, but now you have received his mercy" (I Peter 2:9-10 TEV).

Worship is getting in touch with reality at its deepest points—a recognition and affirmation that at the very

heart of life we are dependent upon God who is creator, sustainer, and redeemer of our lives. Worship is also response to this awareness through the acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the commitment of our lives to the service of God.

Worship is praise and thanksgiving. At the very heart of worship is recognition of the praiseworthiness of God and the giving of that praise. It is thanksgiving for what God has done, as over and over again we see in our lives and all around us evidence of his creative, sustaining, and redeeming activity.

Worship is a source of strength and comfort. We need periodic renewal in spirit as well as body. Worship is an occasion for that renewal. In our reaching out to God we discover that he is reaching out to us. From the encounter of our lives with God we receive strength to meet the demands of the day, and comfort in the midst of trial and tribulation.

Worship is communion and fellowship with God and with fellow Christians. Not only do we meet the Spirit of God in worship, but our lives encounter the lives and spirits of our fellow worshipers, and in the solidarity of the community we find strength, support, and a renewed commitment to live our lives in witness and service to God and humankind.

Worship is challenge and renewal of commitment. In worship we are reminded that things do not have to be as they are. Change is possible—in our personal lives and in the life of our society and our world. The challenge to change is given; a renewed commitment to being instruments for the effecting of that change results. We go forth to witness, serve, and act on behalf of the God we meet in Jesus Christ.

Worship is proclamation—declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a witness to what God has done. Recall the frequent times that the apostles in the Acts refer to themselves as "witnesses" to the death and resurrection of Christ. This is what the church is all about—the telling of the good news of what God has done in Christ. Central to that telling is worship with its proclamation of the good news of the gospel.

These responses to the question, What is worship? suggest that specific things happen in the lives of individuals and the life of the church as a result of our participation in worship. Some of the results of worship can be listed as follows:<sup>1</sup>

1. We gain insight into things as they really are; we perceive the inner nature of things, rediscovering that in everything we are dependent upon God.
2. We gain insight into our relationships to the world, to our neighbor, and to ourselves.
3. We increase in our knowledge of the meaning of Jesus Christ for our lives and for our time.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from James White, *New Forms of Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), pp. 41-43; and H. Grady Hardin, Joseph D. Quillian, Jr. and James White, *The Celebration of the Gospel* (Abingdon, 1964), p. 73.

4. We become more fully able to trust God.
5. We become more able to express our dedication and commitment in good works.
6. We receive the comfort, strength, and peace of the presence of God.
7. We experience forgiveness, renewal, reconciliation, and joy as participants with all Christians in the victory of God in Jesus Christ.
8. We become the church, a committed community of followers of Jesus Christ who have heard the call to ministry and who commit our lives, individually and corporately, to witness and service in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ.

### Planning and Leading Public Worship

Let's look now at some principles to keep in mind when planning for public or corporate worship. These principles will apply to all the settings in which worship may occur, including the Sunday morning worship of the congregation, the worship of a class or organization, the worship of a congregation gathered in a nursing home, retirement home, or campground, or any other setting.

1. Strive for wholeness. There should be unity in a worship service. Just as it was suggested in the section on the art of communication that a message should have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion, so it is with a worship service. The service should convey the sense that the parts are all related to one another and fit together properly. The sense of wholeness will be reinforced by appropriate selection of hymns, prayers, scriptures, anthems, sermon theme, and all the other materials used in the worship service.

The wholeness of the worship service is also expressed as the service becomes the vehicle for the expression of the whole gospel. That is, the service should not emphasize one aspect of the gospel to the exclusion of all other aspects, but should be a balanced and total presentation of what God has done through Jesus Christ.

2. Be sensitive to rhythm. There should be a feeling of movement about the service of worship. Worshipers should be led to experience moments of high emotion as well as moments of quietness and contemplation. In the movement from one act of worship to another, there should be time for congregational response and a building upon each part so that worship is experienced as a masterpiece of music might be experienced.

3. Plan for the involvement of the people. Liturgy is "the work of the people." The service should provide for active participation of the people. This means that worshipers cannot be spectators. They must be in the midst of the action. The acts of worship must be truly acts of all the people, not just of the leaders of worship.

4. Be biblical. The foundations of the worship experience are to be found in biblical thought and

experience. This does not mean that the only language used in worship should be from the Scriptures, or that only forms or acts of worship mentioned in the Scriptures should be used. It does mean that worship must be biblical in its content, faithful to the record and revelation of the Scriptures.

5. Be faithful to the Christian heritage. The worship experience should be a faithful recounting of what God has done in Jesus Christ. It should be in touch with the experience of the Christian community over the centuries of its existence. It should help worshipers draw upon the resources of their heritage for the living of today.

The following criteria for judging any new form of worship are based on suggestions by Dr. James F. White of Perkins School of Theology:

1. It must be natural to the perceptual and expressive character of the worshipers. This is the pastoral norm. An acceptable worship form is one that takes into consideration the cultural, aesthetic, and psychological influences upon the life of the worshiper. It must be one that the worshiper can enter into naturally and with appreciation.

2. It must express Christian faith. This is the theological norm. You must be able to answer positively the question, Can this be done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? The form of worship must be a clear expression of one aspect of the Christian faith as taught in the tradition of which the worshipers are a part.

3. It must draw upon those forms which have functioned well in the past to express Christian worship. This is the historical norm. Any new form must be tested against the usage and practice of the Christian Church and, for us, our United Methodist heritage and traditions.<sup>2</sup>

In the preparation of a worship service, you have some basic resources upon which you may draw for the development of an order of service. These include the Scriptures, prayers, litanies, creeds, music (anthems, hymns, instrumental music), and sermon. The order in which these elements are arranged will vary, though experience and history give us some important directions on this matter. For the lay speaker seeking help in the building of a pattern for worship, there are two principle sources in our United Methodist Church today. Both of these are patterns for the Sunday worship of United Methodists, but with little adaptation can serve as a basic pattern for any setting in which worship is appropriate and is to be included.

The first basic pattern for worship is to be found in *The Book of Worship* and *The Book of Hymns*. "The Order of Worship, Complete Form" is an adaptation of the service of worship prepared for Methodists in North America by John Wesley in 1784. It is based on the

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from James F. White, *New Forms of Worship*, p. 32.

service set forth in *The Book of Common Prayer* of 1662. As such it has its roots in the synagogue tradition described earlier, and in the devotional practices of the Middle Ages and the early church. It also includes elements of nineteenth century American worship: hymn singing, extempore prayer, and an invitation to Christian discipleship.

*The Book of Hymns* contains a brief form of this order of worship, which is as follows:

- † *Let the people be in silent meditation and prayer upon entering the sanctuary. Let the service of worship begin at the time appointed.*
- † *At the end of all prayers the people shall say Amen.*

#### PRELUDE

SCRIPTURE SENTENCES, OR CALL TO WORSHIP † *To be said or sung.*

HYMN † *The people standing.*

PRAYERS † *Here the minister may use an invocation or collect and prayers of confession and the Lord's Prayer.*

PSALTER OR OTHER ACT OF PRAISE † *To be read responsively or in unison, the people standing; then shall be said or sung the Gloria Patri.*

#### ANTHEM

#### THE SCRIPTURE LESSONS

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH † *The people standing; then may be sung a doxology.*

#### PASTORAL PRAYER

#### OFFERTORY

† *Here parish notices may be given.*

† *The minister may read Scripture sentences before the offering is received. An anthem may be sung during the receiving of the offering. Following the presentation of the offering a prayer of dedication may be said or sung.*

† *At the discretion of the minister the offertory and prayers may follow the sermon.*

HYMN † *The people standing.*

#### THE SERMON

#### INVITATION TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

HYMN † *The people standing.*

BENEDICTION † *The people may be seated for silent prayer.*

#### POSTLUDE

A second basic pattern for worship services is to be found in *Word and Table: A Basic Pattern of Sunday Worship for United Methodists* (Abingdon, 1976) prepared by the Section on Worship of the Board of Discipleship. This basic pattern seeks to incorporate many of the insights of recent worship studies and the liturgical revival of recent years. It is not simply a revision of older forms, but an attempt to recover some of the biblical roots and the rich heritage of the early church. It combines both the service of the Word and the service of the Lord's Supper. For those occasions when the sacrament is not to be celebrated, a simple adaptation provides for a rich and meaningful

order of service. The basic pattern is presented in this way:<sup>3</sup>

#### *A Basic Pattern of Worship*

#### GATHERING OF THE CHURCH

The people come together in the Lord's name. There may be greetings, music and song, prayer and praise.

#### PROCLAMATION AND PRAISE

The Scriptures are opened to the people through readings, preaching, witnessing, music, or other arts and media.

#### RESPONSES AND OFFERINGS

These include acts of commitment and faith, with offerings of concerns, prayers, gifts, and service for the world and for each other.

#### TAKING THE BREAD AND CUP

As Jesus took the bread and cup, so do we.

#### THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

As Jesus gave thanks over the bread and cup, so do we.

#### BREAKING THE BREAD

As Jesus broke the bread, so do we.

#### GIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

As Jesus gave the bread and cup to His disciples, so we share them with one another and scatter into the world with his blessing.

The pattern adapted for use on occasions when the Lord's Supper is not to be celebrated looks like this:<sup>4</sup>  
An Order When the Lord's Supper Is Not Celebrated

- Gathering
- Greeting
- Hymn or Song
- Opening Prayer(s)
- [Act of Praise]
- [Prayer for Illumination]
- Scripture Lection
- [Psalter or Anthem]
- [Scripture Lection]
- Sermon
- Responses to the Word
- Concerns and Prayers
- [The Peace]
- Offering
- Prayer of Thanksgiving
- The Lord's Prayer
- Hymn or Song
- Dismissal with Blessing

<sup>3</sup> *Word and Table*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Word and Table*, p. 10.

The study and utilization of either of these patterns of worship will provide a firm foundation for the lay speaker seeking to develop skill in the planning of worship services. *The Book of Worship* and *Word and Table* both contain extensive resource sections to help in the development of worship services using these patterns. The three anthologies in the *Ventures in Worship* series contain many contemporary worship resources.

#### Resources

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## REACHING OUT: SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAY SPEAKERS

Richard S. Smith

• On the fourth Sunday of each month, John conducts a service of worship at the Wesley Home, a retirement home sponsored by his Annual Conference.

• Sally leads a prayer and praise service at the New Hope Mission on Wednesday evenings. New Hope Mission is a project of the City Missionary Society serving transient women.

• Bill is a teacher of an adult class in the church school.

• Tom is one of twenty persons who take turns conducting worship services at campgrounds in their district during the summer months.

• Mary, Evelyn, David, and James are lay liturgists in their local church, each serving one Sunday a month.

What do these persons have in common? They are all lay speakers. Their service responsibilities are varied, reflecting the variety of ways in which lay speakers serve in The United Methodist Church.

### No Silent Pulpits!

Lay speaking has its roots in lay preaching. This service role for lay persons began in the time of the Wesleys. Tradition has it that the leader of the prayer meeting at which John Wesley had his conversion experience was William Holland, a house painter who was a member of the Moravian Brethren. Methodist classes and fellowships did not spread rapidly until John Wesley, at his mother's urging, accepted lay persons as worship leaders.

In the American colonies many of the early circuit riders were unordained lay persons. The beginnings of Methodism are to be found in the witness and work of lay persons such as Captain Webb, Barbara Heck, and Robert Strawbridge.

The office of lay speaker began in the former Methodist churches in the 1930s, along with an increased emphasis upon lay activities and the organization of district and conference boards of lay activities. The first lay speakers served as pulpit supplies "that there may be no silent pulpits in Methodist churches."

"No silent pulpits!" That is a theme that has caught the imagination of many lay and clergy persons. It is in part a response to the fact that, as a denomination of small-membership churches, Methodism has been unable to provide an ordained clergy person to conduct services of worship every Sunday in every church and preaching place. In order that there might be no silent pulpits, lay persons have accepted training, been designated as lay speakers, and been available for assignment to fill pulpits on Sundays when the pastor could not be present.

From these beginnings in pulpit supply activities, lay speaking has grown and the service opportunities have broadened considerably. Some of the changes in lay speaking are reflective of changes taking place in our churches and communities. Some of the changes reflect the increased emphasis upon the ministry of the laity and the responsibility of all Christians to be in ministries of witness and service. Whatever the service opportunity, the service of lay speakers always calls for

the use of the spoken word to "inspire persons to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective churchmanship."

### Service Opportunities Today

The Division of Lay Life and Work of the Board of Discipleship did a survey in 1974-75 of lay speakers and district and conference leaders to gather information about the current activities of lay speakers. The list of ways in which lay speakers are now serving was long and varied.

The three most frequently mentioned activities of lay speakers were pulpit supply, worship leadership, and teaching in the church school. Other activities listed indicate that the lay speaker can expect to serve in one or more of the following capacities:

- speaker at meetings of organizations such as United Methodist Men or United Methodist Women
- lay liturgist
- worship leader in nursing and retirement homes
- worship leader at campgrounds
- speaker at community organizations
- worship leader at jails and penal institutions
- leader of Bible study and prayer groups
- conference program interpreter
- devotional leader at meetings of church groups, boards, and committees
- parish visitor
- participant in lay witness missions

From this study, two observations can be made about the service opportunities for lay speakers today.

First, the primary opportunities for service are in the local churches in which lay speakers hold membership. In these churches lay speakers serve as liturgists in Sunday services, leaders of Bible study and prayer groups, church school teachers, parish visitors, devotional leaders, office holders and lay leaders, and in many other positions in which skills in spoken communication enhance their ability to serve.

Second, a variety of service opportunities is available in beyond the local church settings, but these opportunities frequently involve responsibilities other than pulpit supply. Worship leadership in homes, institutions, and campgrounds is now frequently coordinated through district committees. Districts and conferences invite lay speakers to become acquainted with the work of the benevolent institutions in their area and then to be available to tell the story to local churches. Cooperative parishes train lay speakers to assist the pastoral leaders in the conduct of Sunday services, study and prayer groups, and new member-classes and visitation.

Once a person is certified as a lay speaker, he or she can expect that some requests for service will come as a result of being on the local church and district list of lay speakers. The current *Discipline* statement makes it

clear, however, that lay speakers have a responsibility to take initiative in finding ways to use their skills in the service of the Church.

Within the local church of membership, lay speakers serve under the guidance and direction of the pastor. Requests for service come from groups needing such service, from classes, committees, organizations, or through the Committee on Nominations and Personnel. Lay speakers should plan to talk regularly with their pastor about their service and ways in which they can be most helpful in the local church.

Service opportunities beyond the local church are usually coordinated by a district or conference director of lay speaking and district superintendent. Some districts will have task forces of the District Council on Ministries responsible for specific ministry projects, and these committees may call upon lay speakers for assistance. A District Committee on Lay Speaking may be responsible for coordinating worship leadership in institutions and working with the district superintendent to meet the pulpit supply needs. When serving in local churches other than those in which they hold membership, lay speakers serve under the guidance and direction of the local pastor and/or the district superintendent.

### Guidelines for Effective Service

1. *Communicate the whole gospel of Jesus Christ.* The message of Christ is a message for the whole person and the whole society. It speaks to all our relationships: our relationship with God, our relationships with other persons, and our relationships with our communities and the natural world. In presenting the gospel message, we must take care not to focus upon one aspect of that message to the exclusion of all others. An emphasis upon the personal experience of God in Christ must be accompanied by an emphasis upon the gospel message applied to our total society: the personal gospel and the social gospel go hand-in-hand.

2. *Be sensitive to the needs of persons.* As much as possible, become acquainted with the specific needs, interests, and life situations of those with whom you speak. Relate your message to them in ways that will help them see the meaningfulness of the gospel for their lives at this time.

3. *Be enthusiastic and positive in your presentation.* Whether telling of Christ or the ministry of your church, or making a personal witness to what God has done for you, do it with enthusiasm and in a way that will help persons to see its positive effects upon your life, our world, and, potentially, for their lives.

4. *Share your personal experience.* Nothing convinces others of the reality and power of the gospel as much as your personal witness to what God has done for you.

Your story of how you struggle to live out the Christian faith in your life, your witness to your successes, your confessions of your failures will all help persons to see how they too can live as Christians in today's world.

5. *Be loyal to The United Methodist Church.* The opportunity to serve as a lay speaker in our Church is a privilege. Hold up the exciting ministries of our churches, the great heritage of which we are a part, the significant witness to the gospel borne by the people called Methodists. This does not mean that you should not criticize or suggest ways of improving our life as a denomination. But such discussions should always be in the spirit of love, and appropriate to the audience and the setting in which you speak.

6. *Be open and receptive to feedback from others.* You will learn more and be able to improve your ministry by attention to the suggestions, comments, and responses

from those whom you serve. As appropriate, invite others to suggest ways in which you can improve your speaking abilities.

7. *Participate regularly in worship and study.* Your personal participation in the worship and study life of your church is an essential ingredient in your continuing growth as a lay speaker.

8. *Enroll in the courses offered by your district or conference for lay speakers.* The 1976 *Discipline* provides that lay speakers are to renew their certification each year, and that once in every three years they should participate in an advanced course for lay speakers. A personal goal of one training experience each year would be most appropriate for you as a lay speaker. Regular attention to the improvement of our skills and growth in our understandings of the Christian faith is essential for continued effective service.

## RESOURCES FOR THE LAY SPEAKING PROGRAM

Resources to support the lay speaker program are prepared by the Division of Lay Life and Work of the Board of Discipleship, published by The United Methodist Publishing House, and distributed through the Cokesbury Regional Service Centers. For a complete list of these resources, see your current Cokesbury Church and Church School Supplies Catalog.

### Basic Course for Lay Speaker Training *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*

A reading and study book for lay speakers and for use in the basic training course. It provides an introduction to lay speaking and assists the user in the development of the understandings and skills needed by lay speakers.

### *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Leader's Guide*

Guidance for persons responsible for planning and leading basic training programs for lay speakers and prospective lay speakers. It includes suggested learning objectives, methods, and activities for training sessions.

### Advanced Courses for Lay Speakers *Advanced Courses for Lay Speakers*

Basic guidance for the planning of advanced courses for lay speaker training. It includes a section on planning and administering advanced courses and detailed guidance for courses in four different areas. Topics for courses and related textbooks suggested for class use include:

### *Effective Communication Through Public Speaking* Text: Sleeth, Ronald E. *Look Who's Talking*. Abingdon, 1977, \$3.95.

### *Understanding and Using the Bible*

Text: Barclay, William J. *Introducing the Bible*. Abingdon, 1972, \$1.45.

### *Understanding and Leading Public Worship*

Text: *Word and Table*. Abingdon, 1976, \$2.50.

### *Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions*

Text: Armstrong, James. *United Methodist Primer: Discipleship Resources*, 1976, \$1.50.

### *Basic Christian Beliefs*

Text: Colaw, Emerson. *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian*. Tidings, 1972, \$2.25.

### Handbook for Leaders

### *Handbook: Lay Speaking in The United Methodist Church*

Basic guidance for district and conference leaders responsible for planning and administering the lay speaker program.

### Other Resources

#### Lay Speaker Credential Card

A wallet-sized card to acknowledge the certification of a lay speaker, with space for a record of the annual renewal.

#### Lay Speaker's Certificate

A certificate designed for framing that acknowledges certification and includes space for the record of annual renewal.

#### Certified Lay Speaker Pin

A lapel pin with the United Methodist cross and flame and designation "Certified Lay Speaker." \$3.75 each.

#### Annual Report Of Lay Speaker

A form for an annual report to the Charge Conference with a copy for the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking. It includes a place to request renewal of certification, and space

for the recommendation of the Charge Conference. Included in the Charge Conference Packet; see Cokesbury catalog.

Cokesbury Regional Service Centers from which resources and catalogs may be ordered:

1910 Main Street, Dallas, Texas 75221

1600 Queen Anne Road, Teaneck, New Jersey 07666

Fifth and Grace Streets, Richmond, Virginia 23261  
201 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37202

1661 North Northwest Highway, Park Ridge, Illinois 60068

85 McAllister Street, San Francisco, California 94102

Discipleship Resources, Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202, has many resources that can be used in lay speaking training. Write for their current catalog, which contains books, study resources, and leader helps for the local church, in the areas of education, evangelism, worship, stewardship, and leadership development.

For information on supplemental resources and assistance in developing your program, contact:

Section on Leadership Development and Training  
Division of Lay Life and Work

Board of Discipleship

Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202

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# INTRODUCTION TO LAY SPEAKING

## RESOURCE BOOK

Prepared by  
Richard S. Smith, Staff,  
Division of Lay Life and Work,  
Board of Discipleship,  
The United Methodist Church

This basic resource is designed primarily to help lay speakers and prospective lay speakers who desire to improve their reading and studying skills that they may more effectively witness their Christian faith through verbal communication.

### The Contents

- You and Lay Speaking
- Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions
- The Art of Communication
- Expressing Your Faith
- Using and Interpreting the Bible
- Understanding and Planning Public Worship
- Reaching Out: Service Opportunities for Lay Speakers

A copy of this book is needed for each class participant. A companion book, *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Leader's Guide*, contains suggestions for persons who plan and lead training events using this resource book.

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225

The United Methodist Publishing House

# ADVANCED COURSES FOR LAY SPEAKERS

GUIDANCE FOR LEADERS



## ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is one of the basic resources for the lay speaker program of The United Methodist Church. It has been prepared by the Division of Lay Life and Work of the Board of Discipleship and includes leaders' guides and planning information for five advanced courses for lay speakers. Other resources for the lay speaker program are listed at the back of this book.

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AT CLAREMONT  
*California*

# ADVANCED COURSES FOR LAY SPEAKERS

## CONTENTS

|                                                                                  |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Lay Speaking in <i>The Book of Discipline</i> .....                              | 3  |
| Introduction.....                                                                | 3  |
| Planning for Advanced Courses.....                                               | 4  |
| Leader's Guides:                                                                 |    |
| Effective Communication Through Public Speaking <i>Thomas M. Schneider</i> ..... | 7  |
| Understanding and Leading Public Worship <i>Hoyt L. Hickman</i> .....            | 16 |
| Understanding and Using the Bible<br><i>Lon A. Speer</i> .....                   | 22 |
| Basic Christian Beliefs<br><i>Harold K. Bales</i> .....                          | 35 |
| Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions<br><i>Donald B Ruthenberg</i> ..... | 42 |
| Resources for the Lay Speaker Program.....                                       | 47 |

## LAY SPEAKING IN THE 1976 BOOK OF DISCIPLINE

### Section IX. Lay Speaking

#### ¶ 270.

1. A *lay speaker* is a member of a local church who is well informed on the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church and who has received specific training to develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication.
2. Lay speakers are to serve the church in any way in which the witness of the spoken word inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective churchmanship, including the interpretation or explanation of the Scriptures, doctrine, organization, and life of the Church.
3. Through continued study and training, a lay speaker should prepare to undertake one or more of the following functions, giving primary attention to service within the local church.
  - a. To take initiative in giving assistance and support to the program emphases of the Church and to assist in giving vital leadership to the total work of the Church.
  - b. To assist in the conduct of worship services and to lead meetings for prayer, study, and discussion when requested by the pastor.
  - c. To conduct services of worship, present sermons and addresses, and lead meetings for study and training in settings other than those in the local church in which the lay speaker holds membership, when recommended or requested by a pastor or district superintendent.

#### ¶ 271. Certification of Lay Speakers.

1. A candidate may be certified as a lay speaker by the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking (or

other responsible group as the district or conference may determine) after the candidate has:

- a. Completed a training course for lay speakers, which may be one recommended by the Board of Discipleship or an alternate approved by the appropriate committee.
- b. Made application in writing to the appropriate committee and has been recommended by the pastor and the Administrative Board or the Charge Conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership.
- c. Appeared before the appropriate committee for a review of his or her application and a consideration of responsibilities of a lay speaker.

2. It is recommended that a consecration service be held in the district for persons certified as lay speakers.

#### ¶ 272. Renewal of Certification of Lay Speakers.

1. The certification of a lay speaker may be renewed annually by the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking (or other responsible group as the district or conference may determine), after the lay speaker has:
  - a. Requested in writing the renewal of certification.
  - b. Submitted an annual report to his or her Charge Conference and the appropriate committee, giving evidence of the satisfactory performance of activities related to the office of lay speaker.
  - c. Been recommended by the pastor and the Administrative Board or Charge Conference.
- d. Completed at least once in every three years an advanced course for lay speakers, which may be one recommended by the Board of Discipleship or an alternate approved by the appropriate committee.

## INTRODUCTION

An advanced course for lay speakers? Sound boring? Well it doesn't have to be. It can be one of the more exciting experiences in continuing education for lay persons in the church. This guide has been prepared to help you develop such a course in your local church, your district, or your Annual Conference.

Let's begin by talking about the purpose and objectives for advanced courses.

Lay speakers are called to serve the church in ways "in which the witness of the spoken word inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ and to more effective churchmanship." It is expected that lay

speakers will be well informed about the Scriptures, about the Christian faith, and about the heritage, organization and life of The United Methodist church. It is also expected that they will receive training to develop their skills in communicating the Christian faith through the spoken word.

The *Discipline* now requires that lay speakers complete a basic course of preparation before their original certification. One of the requirements for the renewal of their certification is that they have completed at least once in every three years an advanced course. Such courses are to be ones recommended by the Board of Discipleship or alternates approved by the conference or district Committee on Lay Speaking.

We have included in this book leader's guides for five advanced courses. This is the first series of such guides developed by the Board of Discipleship to fulfill its obligation to provide recommended courses.

The following are the general objectives for these courses:

1. To help lay speakers grow in their understanding of the Bible, the Christian faith, Christian worship, the heritage and traditions of The United Methodist Church, and the principles of communication.
2. To help lay speakers develop and improve their skills in spoken communication.

3. To help lay speakers develop their ability to use their understanding and experience of the Christian faith, Bible, worship, and the heritage and traditions of their church in the preparation and delivery of speeches, sermons, and other forms of spoken witness and in the leadership of public worship.

The five areas chosen for inclusion in this first book of leader's guides for advanced courses are closely related to the areas covered in the basic course for lay speakers. It is intended that the advanced courses be an opportunity for in-depth study and development of skill in areas that it was only possible to introduce in the basic course. We presume that persons taking the advanced courses will have completed the basic course; a rereading of the appropriate chapters in the participant's book for that course would be a good introduction to the advanced course.

In the development of the specific course plans, leaders should keep in mind that participants are lay speakers. Our objectives include, not only growth in understanding, but also the development of skill in spoken communication. For this reason, we include in the suggested activities and exercises for many of the sessions some that will give participants an opportunity to practice using their new understandings and information.

## PLANNING FOR ADVANCED COURSES

### WHO PLANS?

The responsibility for certification and renewal of certification of lay speakers is assigned to a district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking or other committee as designated by the annual conference (¶¶ 271-72). Thus the provision of opportunities for persons to participate in training programs is also a responsibility of the district or conference committee.

In some Annual Conferences, the training responsibility may be assigned to a task force or committee on leadership training of the district or conference Council on Ministries. In other situations, the training programs may be sponsored and planned by a cluster of charges or a single local church or charge. In these latter situations, the district or conference committee will need to approve the specific program so that it can be recognized as meeting the training requirement for those seeking renewal of certification as lay speakers.

In most cases, the district or conference director of lay speaking will probably be the chairperson of the planning team and will be responsible for the administration of the training program. Members of the team should include some lay speakers, a pastor or two with special expertise in training and interest in the lay speaker program, and lay persons with special

skills in the planning and leading of training events. If you are a local church or a charge planning a training program, you will find it helpful to call upon the district or conference director of lay speaking to serve as a consultant for your planning team.

### WHEN? WHAT SCHEDULE?

Since the *Discipline* now requires that persons seeking renewal of their certification as lay speakers complete an advanced training course at least once in every three years, you will probably find it necessary to offer both basic and advanced courses yearly in most districts. You might well develop a long-term plan, offering a variety of advanced courses over a period of years, thus providing opportunity for a choice of course according to interest and need on the part of the lay speakers.

A possible three year plan for lay-speaker courses might look something like this:

First year: Basic course

Two advanced courses:

Effective Communication  
Through Public Speaking  
Understanding and Using the Bible

Second Year: Basic course

Two advanced courses:

Understanding and Leading Worship  
Basic Christian Beliefs

Third Year: Basic course

Two advanced courses:

Effective Communication  
Through Public Speaking  
Our United Methodist Heritage  
and Traditions

The leader's guides in this book have been prepared with suggestions for five sessions of about two hours each or a total of ten hours of class time. In every case we presume that some time will elapse between sessions to permit preparation for the next session. For this reason, we suggest that these courses are best offered over a period of weeks, perhaps one night a week for five weeks, or two nights a week for three weeks. Another approach would be to offer the course on Saturday mornings or Sunday afternoon or evening for a period of weeks.

It is possible to adapt the leadership suggestions to a variety of schedules, including that of a weekend retreat. If you choose a retreat, we strongly urge that participants be expected to do some advance preparation before coming to the retreat; a minimum would be to read the suggested basic text. You might plan a one evening orientation session several weeks in advance of the retreat to share the objectives for the course, introduce participants to one another, and provide them with the resources that they will need in order to prepare for the retreat.

Some districts are now including lay speaker courses in the annual Christian Worker Schools or other district leadership schools. If such is the case, your Committee on Lay Speaking will want to be in close touch with those responsible for planning the leadership school.

### **SELECTING COURSES**

Advanced courses should be either those recommended by the Board of Discipleship or alternates approved by the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking. The five areas included in this book are among those content areas for training of lay speakers most frequently suggested in a national survey of lay speaking conducted by the Board of Discipleship.

The selection of topics or areas for courses in your district should reflect both the interest of your lay speakers and your own awareness of areas in which lay speakers need to have competence. Your committee can be helped by an interest survey among the lay speakers of the district. At the end of each basic course, participants could be asked to identify those areas in which they would like to engage in further study. Other lay speakers could be contacted in a mail

or telephone survey carried out by your district planning team or committee.

We suggest that consideration be given to offering more frequently the course in public speaking and communications than the other courses. This is an area in which lay speakers need continued opportunity for the development and improvement of their skills.

Many other resources and guides for courses suitable for lay speakers are available. Your planning committee or leadership team can adapt adult study courses to meet the needs of lay speakers. In this program, it is suggested that emphasis be given not only to the development of understanding or the gaining of new information but also to the development of skills in spoken communication. It is this emphasis you will frequently need to provide in courses that were originally prepared for church school study groups or personal enrichment.

An excellent listing of adult study courses, many of which could be used in the lay speaker program, will be found in *Adult Planbook*. This is the yearly listing of resources in adult education from The United Methodist Publishing House and the Curriculum Resources Committee of the Board of Discipleship. Series, such as Christian Faith in Life, Our Living Bible, and Our Living Faith, or the various elective studies are all adaptable to the lay speaker program.

### **LEADERSHIP FOR THE COURSES**

Your planning team may or may not include the persons who will actually provide leadership for the courses. Several of the course guides in this book suggest the use of a leadership team of two or more persons. Some suggest a single leader. Whatever the approach, your planning committee will want to choose as leaders persons with experience in the lay speaker program and with skill in planning for and leading groups of adults in learning experiences. Such persons may be found among the pastors on your district. Many will be found in the faculties of the high schools, colleges, and universities of your area. You will be especially fortunate if you have a United Methodist-related school in your area, for you will frequently find persons who have a real interest and willingness to assist you on these faculties.

Your conference or district Committee on Lay Speaking may have a list of persons who are available to provide leadership. In some conferences, such persons will have completed special preparation workshops to equip themselves for this task.

After you have selected your leaders, be sure to spend time with them discussing your hopes and expectations and the objectives for the course. Help them think through the preparation that will need to be made of the physical facilities, the resources that will need to be gathered, and the information that they will want to share with participants prior to the first

session. You will then want to identify ways in which you can help them with these tasks. Leaders need to be assured of your continued support and helpful involvement in the training program.

### **RESOURCES**

Each of the leader's guides in this book is related to a basic text, a book in print available through Cokesbury.

Additional resources for use by leaders and/or participants are suggested in each of the guides. Sources are clearly indicated.

It is suggested that your planning team help leaders with the procurement of needed resources. In addition, you may want to arrange for a display table with books for sale. Such a table is an asset in any lay speaker training program. Be sure to plan well in advance for the rental of films or filmstrips and for the necessary equipment for the showing of these.

You may wish to charge a registration fee for your advanced courses, using it to purchase and make available in advance the basic text for the course.

### **RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS**

How will people know about your course? An announcement in the weekly bulletin of the churches of your district is a possibility. A mail announcement to lay speakers telling them of the offering of the advanced course can be helpful. Neither of these approaches, however, will probably be sufficient to recruit all the potential participants in your program. A variety of means are usually required: mail contacts, telephone contacts, personal visits.

You will need to plan thoroughly and carefully for the recruitment of participants. Such a program will begin well in advance of the course date by alerting prospective participants to the course and then following this up with more personal kinds of contact to obtain their commitment to attend. Responsibility for the recruitment of participants should not rest with the leaders of the course. Let persons be assigned from your planning team to carry on this task.

How many persons should be in an advanced course? This will depend in part on the leadership style and the processes to be used in the course. Usually ten to fifteen persons will make an exciting and rewarding group. Groups of over twenty-five persons are frequently too large to provide opportunity for the skill development that is essential in lay speaker programs. In some cases you may find it helpful to divide into work groups and thus be able to accommodate more persons in your total program. The maximum number of participants in any course should be a matter of decision by the leadership team and the planning team consulting together.

### **EVALUATION**

You will need to plan for evaluations of the course from both participants and leaders. While the leaders will be obtaining ongoing evaluations from participants during the course, you will want to obtain from participants and leaders at the end of the course their evaluation of the degree to which the course was effective in helping them reach their learning goals and in attaining the course objectives that you had as a planning team for the course.

One way of obtaining such an evaluation would be to provide an opportunity in the last ten to fifteen minutes of the final session for participants to share verbally their comments about the course. Following the session, leaders could be invited to meet with your planning team to share participants' comments and to offer their own comments about the program.

Additional evaluations can be obtained by providing a form for written evaluation of the course by both leaders and participants. Such a form should include a listing of the objectives for the course and a space for rating the degree to which the objectives have been achieved. It should also provide space for persons to list the most helpful and least helpful things about the course, their suggestions for the improvement of the course if it is offered again, and their suggestions for additional courses for lay speakers.

### **LEADER'S GUIDES**

In the following sections of this book, we offer leader's guides for five courses for lay speakers. These guides have been prepared by different persons, each selected because of his particular experience and expertise in relation to the content area of the course and also for his experience in teaching and leading groups of adults.

These guides are intended especially for use by persons who are members of leadership teams, or individuals who will serve as leaders, of advanced courses.

We suggest that a planning team review these guides carefully before selecting the specific course to be offered at any given time. Leaders should be selected for their interest, competence, and skill in the content area as well as for their ability to lead groups of adults in learning experiences.

### **A WORD TO LEADERS**

Good luck to you, as you go about the difficult but important task of preparing your own session plan for the advanced course that you have agreed to lead. We hope that you will find these guides a helpful resource; we urge you to adapt them to fit the needs of the persons in your class, and your own interest and ability as a leader.

# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION THROUGH PUBLIC SPEAKING

Thomas M. Schneider

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE COURSE

By the end of this course, participants can expect:

1. To develop knowledge about their abilities in public speaking and communication by assessing their personal competencies in preparing to speak, using nonvocal and vocal communication, and providing group leadership.
2. To develop skills in preparing for public speaking by preparing for presentation a variety of speaking assignments.
3. To develop skills in communicating more effectively by delivering a variety of speaking assignments and by giving and receiving critiques.
4. To develop understanding of some of the basic principles of communication by reflecting back on their own speaking assignments.
5. To develop knowledge about some of the aspects of group dynamics by reflecting on the task and relational aspects of their group's life together.
6. To develop interest in further training by setting for themselves some personal growth goals and strategies.

## OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

The purpose of this training is to equip men and women to be competent public speakers and group leaders and effective communicators.

During the course you will provide participants opportunities for developing skills in preparing for speaking responsibilities as well as in the use of nonvocal and vocal communication. You will also provide opportunities for gaining knowledge about some aspects of leading a group. In all of the sessions competencies in public speaking will be developed primarily through skill-building exercises. Competencies in working with groups will be developed primarily through reflection times in which you and the participants look back over the sessions in order to identify learnings gained from the group experiences. The course will be a blend of self-directed and leader-guided exercises. You should help the participants to determine their own levels of competencies and encourage them to manage their own learning. Opportunity should also be given for the participants to set their own personal growth goals and strategies for any learning they intend to pursue beyond the completion of this course.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR PLANNING

Begin your planning by reading the basic text, *Look Who's Talking!* and this guide.

For each session some methods and activities are suggested. Nevertheless, as the leadership team, you may wish to develop your own plans to fulfill each session's goals. You are encouraged to do so. Selecting your own methods and activities will enable you as individual team members to fully utilize your skills, interests, and understandings. The plans you develop for each session should utilize leader-guided exercises that will fulfill the session's stated goals. The assignments given for completion between sessions should be largely self-directed learning opportunities that emphasize the strengthening of particular competencies chosen by the participants. The suggested design requires two guidelines. First, it is necessary to complete a Competency Assessment Sheet during the first session. This will enable both you and the participants to identify those aspects of public speaking and group leadership that need strengthening. Second, the optimum leader-participant ratio is one leader for every four to six lay speakers-in-training. Time availability and quality expectations make such a ratio necessary.

Using the models on page 12-16, prepare in advance of the course the necessary copies of the resource sheets for your sessions.

## BASIC RESOURCES

Text: Sleeth, Ronald E. *Look Who's Talking! A Guide for Lay Speakers in the Church*. Abingdon, 1977.

Browning, Robert; Foster, Charles; and Tilson, Everett. *Ways the Bible Comes Alive in Communicating the Faith*. Cassette Tape Study Course, abingdon audio-graphics.

DeWire, Harry. *Communication as Commitment*. Fortress Press, 1972.

Hill, Dorothy LaCroix. *Leading a Group*. Discipleship Resources, 1966.

Reid, Clyde. *Groups Alive—Church Alive*. Harper & Row, 1969.

## SESSION ONE

### Objectives

By the end of this session participants can expect:

1. To become better acquainted with leaders and with one another.
2. To assess their personal competencies and identify competencies in need of strengthening.
3. To learn to approach the Bible personally in preparing to read Scripture.
4. To identify some learnings on group membership and relationship concerns.
5. To receive an assignment for session two.

## Preparation

In this first session you will need to keep several elements in mind. Participants may be anxious about their acceptance in this new group. You may experience these anxieties yourself! You will need to provide opportunities for persons to gain entry into the group as accepted members. Since a feeling of belonging is almost always the product of shared tasks and experiences, involving persons in group endeavors will foster a personal sense of being accepted. One group task during the first session is the completion of the Competency Assessment Sheet. This sheet can profoundly influence the entire training since it is the vehicle by which you will encourage the participants to take responsibility for their own learning.

Since the Bible is the primary source of the lay speaker's witnessing, attention needs to be directed toward the use of Scripture. You will help the participants to approach the Scriptures personally as a way of helping them to read the Bible interpretively.

In preparing for the session, you will need to familiarize yourself with the Competency Assessment Sheet and be prepared to explain more fully the listed competencies. A reading of the course text, *Look Who's Talking!* will provide you with helpful explanatory information. Information about task and relationship concerns can be gained by reading from *Leading a Group*. You will also need to familiarize yourself with the St. Ignatius Bible Study, included in the resource section of this chapter.

### How to Get Started

The session really begins when the first person arrives. Providing some activity to occupy the early arrivals that is not so complex as to frustrate late arrivals is important. Some examples of such activities include a conversation-refreshment center, a resource table, creating name cards including personal data beyond just the name, or creating a simple poster on some selected theme.

### During the Session

There are many methods of getting acquainted. If you decide not to use name cards or posters, you may invite all persons to present themselves by giving their name followed by a two-minute talk on why they are a lay speaker.

Following this introductory time you will need to give a brief overview of the course emphasizing their responsibility for learning. This will lead into their completing a Competency Assessment Sheet. For the most part you should assume that the various competencies will be self-explanatory, but you will need to be ready to respond to any questions of clarification. After each person has completed a competency assessment you should provide an opportunity for a discussion of what they have discovered. You may wish to generate a discussion in the total group, or in small groups, by asking questions such as: In what ways were you surprised at what you

discovered? Pleased? Challenged? At this point where do you see your need for growth? Where do you see your strengths? It will be beneficial for you to spend time allowing the persons to identify the particular competencies they wish to concentrate on strengthening during the training. Please note that the Competency Assessment Sheet will be used during the final session. You will need to save all the completed sheets for use at that time.

Following their assessment of their competencies, a brief introduction on using their imagination to penetrate into the human dimensions of the Bible will lead participants to a consideration of how to prepare for the reading of Scripture. At this time you should lead the participants through the St. Ignatius Bible Study. (See the guide in the resource section.) For the most part you will need to use biblical passages that relate stories of human interaction, such as, Genesis 22:1-14; Luke 5:1-11 and 5:17-26; John 21:1-19; Acts 9:1-9 and 9:10-19.

Conclude this session with a reflection time to permit the group to identify some of their learnings related to the involvement of persons in the group. This will help the participants to focus their attention on the relational aspect of group dynamics.

### Assignment for the Next Session

The suggested assignment for the next session is for each person to select a scripture passage and, using the St. Ignatius Bible Study process, to prepare to interpretively read the passage. Suggested reading assignments from the course text are chapters 1, 2, and 5.

### Evaluation

Evaluate the session by asking each person to complete a Group Evaluation Sheet. (See the resource section.) If there is time, invite all persons to report on how and why they responded to statement five as they did. It will be important for you to provide at the next session a composite report of this session's evaluation. Such a report might be verbal, printed on hand-outs, or written on newsprint and taped to the wall.

### Concluding the Session

Invite one of the lay speakers-in-training to offer a brief prayer to close the session.

## SESSION TWO

### Objectives

By the end of this session participants can expect:

1. To receive critiques on their interpretively read scripture passages.
2. To give critiques on scripture readings by others.
3. To receive information on how to approach Scripture historically and theologically.
4. To practice writing a helpful thesis sentence and receive information on developing a helpful outline.

5. To identify some learnings about relational and task functions in a group's life.

6. To receive an assignment for session three.

### **Preparation**

In the second session concerns about group acceptance will again emerge, but not as strongly as during the first session. There will be considerable stress, however, since the participants will for the first time be placing themselves in a vulnerable position before the group. Their scripture reading skills are about to be evaluated! Can I trust these persons? will be a question most of them will be considering to some degree. Assurance that everyone belongs, along with a sense of "we're all in this together," needs to be fostered.

In preparing for the second session you will need to familiarize yourself with the Critique Sheet (p. 14) in order to interpret it to others. Reading chapter 4 in the course text will provide you with information relating to ways of approaching the Bible. Another helpful resource is the cassette tape study *Ways the Bible Comes Alive in Communicating the Faith*. Chapter 5 of the course text provides ample information regarding thesis sentences and outlines. Chapter 5 in the book *Leading a Group* will give you an understanding of task and maintenance functions in a group.

### **How to Get Started**

As people arrive for the session you will need to be sensitive to those who may wish to be by themselves in order to consider their scripture passage and those who may wish to talk. By not asking persons to become involved in any activity immediately upon their arrival you will lend support to and approval of those who wish to be by themselves. A refreshment-conversation table or resource table will provide a relaxed climate and gathering point for those who arrive early.

### **During the Session**

Begin the session by distributing and interpreting the Critique Sheet. Before beginning the readings divide the total group into as many critiquing units as there are leaders. There must be one leader working with each unit. Remember the preferred ratio of participants to leaders is four or six to one. The "Forms of Support" item on the Critique Sheet need not be used for the Scripture reading. Persons will need as many Critique Sheets as there are members in their critique unit. Explain that they are to complete one Critique Sheet for each member of their unit who reads, but only for members of their unit. It is recommended that a unit rotation be used to assign the speaking sequence so that a person from unit 1 will read, then one from unit 2, unit 3, and so forth. When one person from each of the units has read, the sequence begins again. This rotation system provides resting and preparation time between reading and evaluation responsibilities. Following the completion of all readings, the members of each unit will share their critiques with all of their unit members who read

Scripture. As a leader you may want to refrain from reading to avoid creating further anxiety in those who may be somewhat uncertain of their own abilities.

Next, you may present a brief lecture on the historical and theological approaches to the Bible. Or, you may want to select a scripture passage, such as Isaiah 6:1-13, to introduce the two approaches to the Bible. Ask the group to list some advantages of knowing the historical setting and circumstances out of which a scripture passage emerged as a basis for discovering the meaning of the passage for us.

Ask each participant to write at least one thesis sentence that captures the key message of the scripture passage that he or she read earlier in the session. You will want to help them to write their thesis sentence as an understandable, positive statement of action. Following their practice writing of these sentences, you should make a presentation on the characteristics of unity, coherence, and emphasis as necessary aspects of a good outline.

At this point focus the group's attention on group dynamics by reflecting over the session to identify some learnings about the relationship between maintenance and task functions plus learnings about relational concerns. Ask them to illustrate from the session these kinds of group dynamics.

### **Assignment for the Next Session**

The suggested assignment is to prepare for presentation a three-minute speech. Their preparation should include the writing of the thesis sentence and outline of their presentation. The source for their talk should be a scripture passage different from the one they have worked on during the second session. They should orient their remarks to the meaning their selected scripture passage has for their life. Suggested reading assignments from the course text are chapters 3, 4, and 6.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluate the session by asking the group members to complete a Group Evaluation Sheet. If there is time, you may suggest that persons report to the group how and why they responded as they did to statements three, or two and four. Remember to plan on reporting the results at the next session.

### **Concluding the Session**

Invite each person to offer a sentence prayer as the group stands together in a circle.

## **SESSION THREE**

### **Objectives**

By the end of this session participants can expect:

1. To receive critiques of their three-minute speech.
2. To give critiques on three-minute speeches of others.
3. To identify some communication principles at work while they and others were speaking.
4. To receive information on creating helpful

introductions and conclusions and integrating helpful forms of support.

5. To identify some learnings about control concerns.
6. To receive an assignment for session four.

### **Preparation**

In many ways the dynamics about which you will need to be aware in this third session will be similar to those of the previous session. In addition, there may be some concern about group member's participation in leadership and control of the group. Preparations to receive persons into the third session could be provided similar to those made for the second session. Persons will likely arrive even more anxious about delivering their assigned talks than they were about reading the Bible. A similarity of preparations will provide a climate of familiarity and security. It will be important to begin on time since the critiquing process will again take place. An added dimension in this session will be the identification of some communication principles at work while persons were speaking. You will also need to inform persons concerning information about introductions, conclusions, and various forms of support. Time management will be an important element in this session.

In preparing for this session you will want to review chapter 1 of the course text to refresh in your thinking some of the basic principles of communication. For additional reading on basic principles see the book *Communication as Commitment*. A review of chapter 7 of the course text will provide you with information concerning introductions, conclusions, and forms of support.

### **How to Get Started**

Begin the session with a brief review of the Critique Sheet. Remind them that during this evaluation they will use the full Critique Sheet including the "Forms of Support" category. As soon as possible you will want to divide the total group into critique units. Remember that there must be at least one leader for each unit. It is recommended that the unit memberships be somewhat different from that of the previous session. Persons will need as many Critique Sheets as they have speakers in their unit. The rotation system used in the second session should again be followed.

### **During the Session**

It will be important for you to advise the group members that they are not only assessing the various aspects of the speaker's presentation and delivery but that they are also responding to a verbalized portion of a person's life. For this reason, all evaluation should be done in a way that will help each speaker grow in the competencies of public speaking. You might suggest that members of the critique units pay special attention to those competencies identified by the speakers as the ones they are most in need of strengthening. Following the completion of all the talks, the critique units will meet to share their

evaluations. One of the issues that may emerge is whether or not the lay speakers-in-training will be afforded an opportunity to critique a speech given by the leader. The decision about leaders giving speeches must be made by your leadership team. But even should you decide to do so, it is probably premature for you to do it in this third session.

After the critiques have been given spend some time identifying the principles of communication at work during the speaking rounds. If this is done in the critique units you should have a report to the total group of the principles that were identified. If this is done in the total group, a listing on newsprint of the principles mentioned will help to emphasize their importance.

After introducing the characteristics of an effective introduction, an effective conclusion, and an effective form of support, ask each of the speakers to use these characteristics to evaluate their own introduction, conclusion, and forms of support. You may want to divide the group into couples so two speakers could work together on this task. The leaders could be available to any person who might desire your evaluation comments.

Following this exercise you should turn the group's attention to group dynamics by asking them to spend a few minutes reflecting on the session in order to identify some occasions when concerns about leadership and control of the group were influencing the group's behavior.

### **Assignment for the Next Session**

The suggested assignment for the next session is to prepare for presentation a three-minute speech on what God is saying to us as people of faith today through the Scriptures. In addition to writing a thesis sentence, preparing an outline, selecting forms of support, and formulating an introduction and conclusion, participants should also plan how they will use their nonvocal communication abilities as well as their vocal skills. They should select a different scripture passage than any they have used in the earlier sessions. The suggested reading assignment from the course text is chapters 7 and 8.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluate the session by using the Group Evaluation Sheet. You might ask persons to report how and why they responded as they did to statement one. Remember to report the results at the next session.

### **Concluding the Session**

Ask the group to close by sharing in a litany of thanksgiving, each person completing the statement "I am thankful for . . ." and the group responding with the words "Praise God from whom all blessings flow!" following each statement.

## **SESSION FOUR**

### **Objectives**

By the end of the session participants can expect:

1. To receive critiques of their three-minute speech.
2. To give critiques on three-minute speeches of others.
3. To identify some communication principles at work while they and others were speaking.
4. To discuss the importance of analyzing the purpose of, setting for, and desired response to any speech.
5. To identify some learnings about various leadership styles and their possible impact on a group's life.
6. To receive an assignment for session five.

### **Preparation**

The flow of this session will in many ways be very similar to the third session. Concerns about relationships likely will not be as pronounced as in the earlier sessions. The anxiety of presenting a talk to be evaluated will continue to remain relatively high. As in the previous session, you will need to provide a climate of familiarity and security in which to receive persons. The management of time will also be of vital importance during this session. During this session you will need to identify various leadership styles used. The three most recognizable styles (autocratic, *laissez faire*, and democratic) can serve as helpful frames of reference. Chapter 5 in the book *Leading a Group* gives a brief description of each style. The concern of group control is intimately related to leadership styles so that along with identifying various styles of leadership you will want to talk about the impact of each style.

Further preparation for this session should include a review of chapter 1 of the course text for a discussion of the principles of communication and chapter 3 for a consideration of the importance of analyzing the purpose of, setting for, and desired response to any speech. A reading of chapter 5 of *Groups Alive—Church Alive* will help focus some of the characteristics of leadership styles along with an analysis of their respective impact on a group.

### **How to Get Started**

Divide the total group into critique units. Remember to have at least one leader for each unit. As before, it is recommended that the unit memberships be changed somewhat from previous sessions. Persons will again need as many Critique Sheets as they have speakers in their units and will complete one Critique Sheet for each speaker of their unit. The rotation sequence used in previous sessions should again be followed. Be sure to emphasize that the purpose of all evaluation is to help speakers grow in their competencies.

### **During the Session**

Following the completion of all talks, the units will meet to share their critiques. If you have decided that the leaders will also give speeches to be evaluated, this

fourth session is probably the most appropriate time for you to do so.

Either in your critique units, or in the total group, spend some time identifying and listing the principles of communication at work during the speaking rounds.

To introduce the topics of a speech's purpose, setting, and desired response, instruct the total group to make three lists itemizing some disadvantages of not knowing a speech's purpose, of not knowing its setting, and of not knowing its desired response. Then discuss with the group some of the difficulties and problems they might anticipate encountering as a result of their listed disadvantages. Following a brief time for discussion, have them make three new lists itemizing the advantages of knowing a speech's purpose, of knowing its setting, and of knowing its desired response. Follow this with a discussion about how their listed advantages could help overcome the difficulties and problems they identified in their previous discussion of disadvantages.

In order to move the group to consider some leadership styles and the relative impact of each style, ask the group members to identify and list as many styles of leadership as they can recall being used throughout the previous sessions. You may wish to stimulate their thinking by explaining briefly the autocratic, *laissez faire*, and democratic styles. Rather than simply communicating through a lecture, you may want to lead the group in brief building exercises with blocks using a different style of leadership for each building exercise.

### **Assignment for the Next Session**

The suggested assignment for the final session is to prepare for presentation a one-minute announcement of an approaching event in the participant's local church. The suggested reading assignment from the course text is chapters 9 and 10.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluate by using the Group Evaluation Sheet. You may invite persons to report on how and why they responded as they did to statements one and two. Remember to report the results.

### **Concluding the Session**

Invite the group to sing the Doxology together.

## **SESSION FIVE**

### **Objectives**

By the end of this session participants can expect:

1. To receive critiques of their prepared announcement.
2. To give critiques of the announcements of others.
3. To identify some communication principles at work while they and others were speaking.
4. To reassess their personal competencies.
5. To set some personal growth goals and strategies.

6. To participate in a closing of the training course.

### Preparation

During this session you can expect persons to be experiencing some ambivalence about the fact that this is the final session. On one side of their ambivalence will be relief that this is the final session while on the other side will be grief that this is the last time they will meet together as a particular group. There will, of course, be no uniformity about this experience. But, it is likely that over the previous sessions most of the group will have invested themselves in the group's life sufficiently to have developed a loyalty to the group. So bringing to a satisfactory close the whole training experience should be a priority emphasis of this session.

In preparing for this session you should review the Growth Goal Sheet (p. 16) and be prepared to explain its use. If you plan on closing the session with a Communion Service you will need to arrange for the bread and juice.

### How to Get Started

Since time management will be of a high priority in this session it will be important for you to move immediately to the evaluation sequence.

### During the Session

In this session follow the process of the earlier sessions: divide into critique units with one leader for each unit, share critiques in each unit, and identify communication principles at work during the speaking rounds.

Following the evaluation of the announcements, you should suggest to the total group that each person complete a new Competency Assessment Sheet. The purpose of this reassessment is to determine the points and degrees of growth during the training. After they have completed their reassessment suggest that they compare their just completed sheet with the Competency Assessment they completed during the first

session. You may ask them to identify any points of growth realized and suggest that they especially examine those points at which they indicated during the initial session they most desired to increase their competencies.

Then, using the Growth Goal Sheet, invite the participants to set at least one personal growth goal and strategy at the point they now most want to gain improvement. Because they are being asked to set a personal growth goal they may not be able to state their goals in precise language. But you should encourage them to write their goals as clearly as possible.

Following the completion of the Growth Goal Sheet, invite persons to share where they have perceived growth in their competencies. Also invite them to share at least one growth goal they have set for themselves. After each person has thus shared, as many of the other members as wish, or as time permits, may share the strengths they have witnessed and growth they have seen in the person.

To confirm the sharings between persons you may wish to participate in a brief Communion Service.

### Evaluation

Use the Group Evaluation Sheet. You might have the group very quickly compare some aspects of the closing evaluation with the composite evaluation of the first session. If there is time, you might invite their responses concerning the comparison.

### Concluding the Session

Invite the group to decide the most appropriate manner in which to conclude this final session.

### Additional Resources

Competency Assessment Sheets  
St. Ignatius Bible Study Order  
Critique Sheet  
Group Evaluation Sheet  
Growth Goal Sheets

## COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT SHEET

Directions: Please check the appropriate column (None—Fair—Good—Excellent) that most closely indicates your current level of competency for each of the following skills in public speaking and leading groups.

### COMPETENCIES IN PREPARING TO SPEAK

|                                      | None | Fair | Good | Excellent |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Gathering and selecting ideas        |      |      |      |           |
| Using the Bible                      |      |      |      |           |
| Writing a thesis sentence            |      |      |      |           |
| Developing an outline                |      |      |      |           |
| Integrating forms of support         |      |      |      |           |
| Creating introductions               |      |      |      |           |
| Creating conclusions                 |      |      |      |           |
| Analyzing purpose of speech          |      |      |      |           |
| Analyzing setting for speech         |      |      |      |           |
| Analyzing desired response to speech |      |      |      |           |

## COMPETENCIES IN NONVOCAL COMMUNICATION

|                    | None | Fair | Good | Excellent |
|--------------------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Posture            |      |      |      |           |
| Gestures           |      |      |      |           |
| Facial expressions |      |      |      |           |
| Eye contact        |      |      |      |           |

## COMPETENCIES IN VOCAL COMMUNICATION

|                                                                          | None | Fair | Good | Excellent |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Intonation<br>(use of speaking range in a sentence)                      |      |      |      |           |
| Articulation<br>(clear enunciation of every word syllable)               |      |      |      |           |
| Inflections<br>(emphasizing a syllable or word to express attitude)      |      |      |      |           |
| Rate<br>(speed of talking)                                               |      |      |      |           |
| Phrasing<br>(communicating a single thought through a grouping of words) |      |      |      |           |
| Pausing<br>(inserting well-placed silence to emphasize thoughts)         |      |      |      |           |

## COMPETENCIES IN LEADING GROUPS: TASK INGREDIENTS

|                                                                                                              | None | Fair | Good | Excellent |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Preparation<br>(being aware of the subject material to be considered and/or developing a proposed agenda)    |      |      |      |           |
| Introduction<br>(determining content and procedure for initiating a meeting)                                 |      |      |      |           |
| Questioning<br>(formulating questions that elicit discussion)                                                |      |      |      |           |
| Summarizing<br>(reviewing a portion or all of a group's discussion in order to tie various strands together) |      |      |      |           |

## COMPETENCIES IN LEADING GROUPS: RELATIONAL INGREDIENTS

|                                                                                                            | None | Fair | Good | Excellent |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Group Membership Concerns<br>(knowing how to enable persons to feel they are accepted)                     |      |      |      |           |
| Group Participation Concerns<br>(knowing how to provide opportunities for persons to influence the group)  |      |      |      |           |
| Group Relationship Concerns<br>(knowing how to promote a sufficient level of trust for open communication) |      |      |      |           |

|                                |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Maintenance and Task Functions |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|

(awareness of how to keep a balance between maintaining a group's life and accomplishing the group's task)

|                                 |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Leadership Styles and Influence |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|

(knowledge of leadership style options and the impact of each style on a group)

### **A BIBLE STUDY ORDER**

based on the study order  
of Ignatius  
(ca. A.D. 35-ca. 107)

1. Select a behavioral passage of human interaction.
2. Read the selection silently; tape record the selection for playback; or, close your eyes while one person reads aloud for all to hear.
3. Recreate the story imaginatively.
  - a. What colors does the story bring to your mind?
  - b. What tastes does the story suggest?
  - c. What textures can you touch and feel?
  - d. What emotions did you experience?
  - e. What smells did you detect?
  - f. What sounds did you hear?
4. Share openly and perhaps record as many responses as persons in your group can give.
5. Choose a member of the general crowd. (If you are reading from one of the gospels, do not select the character of Jesus.) Identify with your selected person and listen to the reading of the Scripture again.
  - a. What was your character thinking?
  - b. What was your character feeling?
6. Begin to ask yourself some questions about the passage.
  - a. What does this passage say about God?
  - b. What does it say about God's relationship with us?
  - c. What does the passage say about you?
  - d. What does the passage say about your relationship with God?
7. Try retelling the story in your own words.
8. As a result of your reading and study make a simple commitment that you can do.
9. Fulfill your commitment and allow the Scriptures to affect your life!

### **CRITIQUE SHEET**

Please circle the appropriate number showing the degree of competency for each skill. Whenever possible give examples to show why you so rated the speaker.

| VOCAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS |  | Poor          |   |   |   | Excellent |           |
|----------------------------|--|---------------|---|---|---|-----------|-----------|
|                            |  | monotone      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4         | varied    |
| Intonation                 |  | slurred       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4         | pitch     |
|                            |  | speech        |   |   |   |           | 5         |
| Articulation               |  | no expression | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4         | clear     |
|                            |  | of attitude   |   |   |   |           | speech    |
| Inflection                 |  | 1             | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5         | attitudes |
|                            |  | one           |   |   |   |           | expressed |
| Rate                       |  | speed         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4         | 5         |
|                            |  |               |   |   |   |           | varied    |
|                            |  |               |   |   |   |           | speeds    |

|                                      | thoughts hard to follow | 2                              | 3 | 4 | thoughts easy to follow |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|
| Phrasing                             | 1 nervous hesitations   |                                |   |   | 5 intentional silences  |
| Pausing                              | 1                       | 2                              | 3 | 4 | 5                       |
| <b>NONVOCAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS</b> |                         |                                |   |   |                         |
| Posture                              | unnaturally stiff       |                                |   |   | naturally at ease       |
|                                      | 1 contradicts ideas     | 2                              | 3 | 4 | 5 reinforces ideas      |
| Gestures                             | 1 tight                 | 2                              | 3 | 4 | 5 flexible              |
| Facial Expressions                   | 1 inconsistent          | 2                              | 3 | 4 | 5 consistent            |
| Eye Contact                          | 1                       | 2                              | 3 | 4 | 5                       |
| <b>FORMS OF SUPPORT</b>              |                         | drew attention away from ideas |   |   | illustrated ideas       |
|                                      |                         | 1                              | 2 | 3 | 4                       |
|                                      |                         |                                |   |   | 5                       |

**MAIN IDEAS TRANSMITTED** (List the main ideas you receive)

## GROUP EVALUATION SHEET

### IN THIS SESSION

(Circle one category for each statement)

1. LEADERSHIP WAS

Dominated by one person

Dominated by a subgroup

Centered in about half the group

Shared by all members of the group

2. COMMUNICATION WAS

Badly blocked

Difficult

Fairly open

Very open and free-flowing

3. PEOPLE WERE

Phony

Hidden

Fairly open

Honest and authentic

4. THE GROUP WAS

Avoiding its task

Loafing

Getting some work done

Working hard at its task

5. I FELT

Misunderstood and rejected

Somewhat misunderstood

Somewhat accepted

Completely accepted and understood by the group

6. The one word I would use to describe the climate of this session is: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Some learnings I have received from this session are:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

8. Suggestions

## GROWTH GOAL SHEET

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of this Growth Goal Sheet is to help lay speakers identify the competencies they most desire to strengthen and to plan a program of learning experiences for their further development.

*Step 1*  
What do you want  
to be able to do  
more effectively?

| LEARNING GOAL |
|---------------|
|---------------|

*Step 2*  
What will you do  
to gain greater  
skills?

| LEARNING STRATEGY |
|-------------------|
|-------------------|

*Step 3*  
How would you  
describe:

MUCH BETTER  
THAN EXPECT-  
ED RESULTS

### GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT EVIDENCE

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |
|  |

EXPECTED OR  
MOST LIKELY  
RESULTS

MUCH WORSE  
THAN EXPECT-  
ED RESULTS

## UNDERSTANDING AND LEADING PUBLIC WORSHIP

Hoyt L. Hickman

### OBJECTIVES FOR THE COURSE

1. To help lay speakers develop an understanding of the purpose and role of worship in the Christian church.
2. To help lay speakers gain an understanding of the biblical, theological, and historical backgrounds of worship in the Protestant tradition.
3. To help lay speakers develop their skills in the planning and leading of public worship.

### OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

This course is planned for five sessions of two hours each; it is possible to use these materials in other structures by rearrangement of sequence and selection of alternate activities. Topics for the five sessions are:

1. What Is Worship?
2. Start with the Basics
3. Understanding the Worship Service

4. Planning for Worship
5. When you are Leading Worship

These sessions are designed to lead progressively to the accomplishment of the basic objectives for the course.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR PLANNING

1. Read this leader's guide and the suggested textbook, *Word and Table*, through in their entirety before planning the specific sessions. You may wish to add, delete, or rearrange the content in order that it may better fit your particular situation. Remember that suggestions in this guide are just that: suggestions to help you plan your course.
2. The more additional reading you can do in advance of the preparation of the specific sessions, the easier it will be for you to develop those sessions. You will find many creative ideas in the resources listed for use in the sessions and in the additional listing at the

end of the guide. To be able to deal with the questions and concerns of the participants in your course, you will need as broad a background as possible in the resources related to the area of worship.

3. Do not feel that you must be able to answer all questions of participants at the time they are raised. A question, whether you know the answer or not, may be the opportunity for an assignment and report that could be a more effective learning experience for the student than would be a simple and immediate answer to the question.

4. Be open to the suggestions and contributions of the participants. Discover what practical problems they may be facing in their lay speaking, what concerns they have brought to the course, and what hopes they have for your time together. Be alert to their motivations, trying to discover the ways open to you to help them learn about worship most effectively. Use some techniques early in the course to discover their present levels of interest, knowledge, and competency in the area of worship so that you can build upon the resources available to you in the class.

5. Remember that we learn more about worship by doing it than we do by simply talking about it.

### **BASIC RESOURCES**

You and the participants will each need a copy of: The Bible (Old and New Testaments)

*The Book of Hymns* (formerly *The Methodist Hymnal*). The United Methodist Publishing House, 1966.

*Word and Table: A Basic Pattern of Sunday Worship for United Methodists*. Abingdon, 1976.

It will also be important for you to have copies of the following books and to make them available to participants as well:

*The Book of Worship*. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1964.

White, James F. *Christian Worship in Transition*. Abingdon, 1976.

The following books will also be helpful to you for your background reading and will be useful as resource books for your class sessions:

Dunkle, William F., Jr., and Quillian, Joseph D., eds. *Companion to the Book of Worship*. Abingdon, 1970.

Hardin, H. Grady; Quillian, Joseph D., Jr.; and White, James F. *The Celebration of the Gospel*. Abingdon, 1964.

White, James F. *New Forms of Worship*. Abingdon, 1971.

Write to the Section on Worship, Board of Discipleship, Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202, for a list of current leaflets, booklets, and other resources that could be used in the course.

## **SESSION ONE: WHAT IS WORSHIP?**

### **Objective**

To help lay speakers develop an understanding of the purposes and role of worship in the Christian church.

### **How to Get Started**

1. Introduce yourself and have the participants introduce themselves. Introductions may include name, local church, and the specific things each person does as a lay speaker.

2. Find out what particular concerns or questions participants would like to deal with in the course. This may be done orally, with someone recording the concerns or questions on chalkboard or newsprint, or paper and pencils may be provided and the concerns or questions received in written form.

3. Give participants an overview of the scope of the course and some indication of the specific concerns you expect to emphasize in the course.

4. Introduce the textbook, *Word and Table*, and indicate how and where it is available. If possible, have it available in the classroom during this session. Explain the assignments for between session activity that will be a part of the course.

5. Ask participants to bring to class a complete Bible (Old and New Testaments). Have a copy of *The Book of Hymns (The Methodist Hymnal)* available for each participant.

6. Recommend additional reading such as *The Book of Worship*, *The Companion to the Book of Worship*, and *Christian Worship in Transition*. You may wish to have these books on sale.

### **Methods and Activities**

1. Since this is the first session and participants will not have done any preparation, you may wish to make an initial presentation, followed by discussion. Your presentation could be based on chapter 2, "What Is Christian Worship?" in the book, *New Forms of Worship*. This should challenge enough commonly held ideas about worship to generate a lively discussion.

2. Questions for discussion, either with or without an initial presentation.

a. Where is God in worship as you have experienced it? Is it mostly talking and singing *about* God, or is it mostly communion *with* God? Is communion with God as you experienced it mostly what you direct toward God, mostly what you receive from God, or a balance of the two?

b. At what times in worship are you most likely to be confident of the presence of God? Least likely?

c. What acts or types of worship in your experience do we tend to do too much of? Too little of?

d. Where is worship of most practical help to you in your life? The least practical help?

e. What phase of worship leadership do you consider most difficult? Most satisfying?  
3. Have an opening or closing service of worship with the participants. In this first session you may wish to conduct the service yourself, or you may be able to plan with some of the participants in advance. Here are some possible acts of worship to include in such a service.

a. Sing a familiar hymn addressed directly to God.

b. You or some good reader in the class read Psalm 139 aloud to the class. The reader may say what this psalm means to him or her and what God may reveal of himself through this psalm.

c. Pray to God whatever thoughts or feelings you would like to add to those in Psalm 139. One person may lead the prayer, or the class may be invited to participate with prayer as individuals may feel moved. You may wish to stand in a circle with hands joined as you pray.

d. Close with the familiar benediction in Numbers 6:24-26.

4. If the worship was not at the end of the session you may wish to discuss it with the class. Here are some questions.

a. What does this worship show you about the possibilities and difficulties of experiencing worship as communion with God?

b. As we sense a closer communion with God, do we also become closer to one another? What are some of the possibilities and difficulties of relating to one another more closely in worship—sharing prayer requests and concerns, joining hands in a circle, sharing insights into Scripture, and so forth?

c. Many persons who read Psalm 139 find it especially difficult to read verses 19-22. Why do you think they are included at that place in the psalm? What can they mean to us today as we read this psalm? A thought for a discussion-starter: perhaps the psalmist was so open and honest with God that he had to blurt out his rage, and perhaps our prayers would be more honest and meaningful if we are as open with God about what we really feel as was the psalmist. Having expressed himself as he did in those verses, why do you think the psalmist then prayed as he did in verses 23-24?

#### Concluding the Session

If the session has not concluded with the worship service, you may wish to gather the class together in a closing prayer circle. You may begin with prayer requests and gather these into a closing prayer, or individuals may pray as they feel led. You might suggest that the class pray for particular benefits that they wish to receive from the study and practice of worship, or for persons and needs in their local congregation, or for one another.

#### Assignment for Next Session

Become familiar with the organization and general contents of *The Book of Hymns*.

Optional assignment: Become familiar with the organization and general contents of *The Book of Worship*.

If members of the class are currently leading worship in a local church or small group, have them bring a recording of themselves reading Scripture, leading prayer, or leading some other act of worship to the next session or to one of the following sessions.

#### Evaluation

What have the participants told you during this session about themselves and their needs that should affect the content of the remaining four sessions? Consider the concerns they expressed, the questions they asked or seemed most interested in, the areas of understanding or leading worship that they perceived as hardest or least meaningful, and your sense of where the class is in its understanding and experience of worship.

## SESSION TWO: START WITH THE BASICS

#### Objective

To continue helping lay speakers develop an understanding of the purposes and role of worship in the Christian church and to help lay speakers develop criteria and priorities in planning and evaluating worship.

#### How to Get Started

1. Ask students if they have any reactions to the content of the assignment or to the first session. Often the comments volunteered by students at the beginning of the session will give you a good clue as to where the class is and how to proceed.

2. You may wish to begin by discussing what worship is. For your personal preparation read chapter 2 of *New Forms of Worship*. (See resource list.)

a. What do you think of the concept of worship as a sharing with God and with one another? What would be other possible ways of looking at worship?

b. Why worship? What is the point in worshiping, and why should anyone want to worship?

c. What do you hope for and expect when you attend worship? Do you think that we should expect more of worship than we often do?

d. What are the criteria, or tests, of a good worship service? How does worship as you experience it measure up to these criteria?

e. How do you react to the idea that as we move closer to the worship of the early Christians we will find our worship more closely related to the world around us today?

f. What forms of preparation do you feel are most important for the one who is leading worship? For those who take part in worship?

## Methods and Activities

Discussing the assigned reading should not take all session. Here are some suggestions for the remainder of the session:

1. If any of the participants have brought in recordings of themselves leading some act of worship, play these recordings and discuss them. It is important to be constructive but also important to be honest in evaluating one another's leadership of worship. The one who has brought in the recording should have a chance to say first of all how he or she reacts to the recording, remembering that we do not sound to ourselves the way we sound to others or on tape. Suggestions should be helpful, specific, and realistic, made in the spirit of Christian love.

2. Have a period of worship during the session. As the course progresses, the participants themselves should be taking an increasing part in the planning and leadership of the worship periods. Here are some possible acts of worship to include.

- a. Begin with a familiar hymn addressed directly to God.
- b. Have someone read Psalm 150 or lead in reading it responsively (*The Book of Hymns*, 606). That person or someone else might then paraphrase that psalm in modern terms, mentioning different ways in which persons today might praise the Lord.
- c. Have a period of prayer, perhaps standing in a circle with hands joined. Ask persons what they wish to praise the Lord for, and let persons praise God as the Spirit moves them.
- d. After praising God, ask for prayer requests—persons and causes that need the prayer of the class. Pray as the Spirit moves.
- e. Close with the benediction in II Corinthians 13:14.

3. Go through *The Book of Hymns* with the class and give some practical pointers for using it. It is a good practice to use *The Book of Hymns* in each of the periods of worship. Features to go over with the class might include the table of contents, the arrangement of hymns, the acts of praise, the numbering by hymns and acts of worship rather than page numbers, and the various indexes (844-53). Indicate how the author, composer, hymn tune name, possible alternate tune, copyright information, and topic are indicated for each hymn. Save your discussion of the orders of worship, the Christian year, and the ritual until a later session.

## Concluding the Session

If the session has not concluded with the worship service, you may wish to gather the class together in a closing prayer circle as in session one.

## Assignment for the Next Session

Read *Word and Table: A Basic Pattern of Sunday Worship for United Methodists*, pages 7-43, and Luke 24:13-35.

Bring a bulletin from the local church in which the lay speaker worships or leads worship.

## Evaluation

By the end of this session you will have received considerably more input from the students concerning their needs. Again consider the questions they asked or seemed most interested in, any comments or evaluation they may have volunteered, and your observations as to the way in which they lead or participate in worship. Change your plans for the remainder of the course wherever this is indicated by your evaluation.

## SESSION THREE: UNDERSTANDING THE WORSHIP SERVICE

### Objective

To help lay speakers understand the basic pattern and orders of weekly worship.

### How to Get Started

1. You may wish to begin this session with a period of worship. Here are some possible acts of worship to include.

- a. Begin with a familiar hymn addressed directly to God.
- b. Have someone lead in prayer, or have a time of spontaneous prayer.
- c. Have someone read Luke 24:13-35 aloud.
- d. Close with a familiar hymn about Christ, addressed to other people (such as 1, 444, 455).

### Methods and Activities

1. Discuss page 8 of *Word and Table* in the light of Luke 24:13-35. Here are some discussion starters.

a. How do you react to the thought that our weekly worship should be an encounter with the living Christ and that "every Sunday is a little Easter?"

b. How is our experience of Christ in worship like that of the disciples on the way to Emmaus? How different? How might these likenesses and differences affect our pattern and orders of worship?

c. What is the place of the Holy Spirit in our experience of the risen Christ? How do you relate the affirmations that Christ "ascended into heaven" and yet "is with us always?"

d. When we gather for worship, what are the most effective ways for us to pour out our hearts to the living Christ as the disciples did when they told him what had happened to them and how they felt about it? Can praise be such an expression? Can confession? What petitions might be appropriate here?

e. "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24:32). How does this experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus relate to the proclamation-and-response pattern of our worship? What are some ways in which we can

enable the living Christ through the Holy Spirit to open to us the Scriptures in our worship today? When our hearts burn within us, what are some ways in which we can express this in worship?

f. After the disciples recognized the risen Christ at Emmaus they returned to Jerusalem and witnessed to what they had experienced. How is our worship today related to going out into our daily worlds and witnessing to the living Christ? How can a hymn that witnesses to people about Christ be an effective closing hymn and an appropriate song to be on our lips as we scatter? How can our dismissal sentences and benedictions best fit in with this scattering to witness?

2. Make a presentation of the orders of service on pages 9-11 of *Word and Table*, or have some member of the class prepared to do this. Discuss these in relation to the basic pattern on page 8. The discussion will go better if you and all the participants have read the introduction and commentary on pages 12-43, which interpret the pattern and orders. Here are some discussion questions.

a. During the gathering of the church why are different customs and sequences appropriate at different times and in different churches? How would you deal with a situation in which some persons prefer to come to the service and begin by quietly meditating, while others prefer to visit with their friends until the formal opening of the service?

b. Why is it important at the beginning of the service that we both greet one another in the Lord's name and also greet the Lord? What is the advantage of singing an opening hymn addressed to God? How does this relate to the nature of our worship as a communion or sharing with God and with one another in his name?

c. What are the advantages in reading the Scriptures immediately before preaching? Of basing the sermon or message on one or more scripture passages that have just been read? Of reading more than one scripture passage? Of responding to scripture with acts of praise? Relate this to Luke 24:27, 32.

d. What are some of the responses and offerings that are appropriate after proclamation and praise? What are the advantages of making those responses and offerings after the proclamation of the Word? How are they expressions of the burning of our hearts within us? What would you say to those who want to go home immediately after hearing the sermon with no response whatever?

e. What are some different ways in which concerns and prayers can be provided for in a worship service? What are the advantages and problems of inviting spontaneous prayer requests or spontaneous prayers from the congregation? How does the size of the congregation and the room

in which they worship affect the manner in which concerns and prayers are best provided for? What are some ways in which persons can express their concerns even in a large congregation or a large room?

f. Is the offering an act of worship or an interlude between times of worship? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having the offering before the lections? Between scripture lections? As part of the response and offerings?

3. Evaluate the orders of worship used in local churches in the light of the above considerations. What are their strong points and their weak points? What specific improvements could be made? Use the bulletins brought from the local churches to this session.

### Concluding the Session

Gather together in a closing prayer circle. By now, the students should be able to lead out freely in spontaneous prayer. Use one of the benedictions in *The Book of Hymns*, 763-67, and point out this collection of benedictions to the class.

### Assignment for the Next Session

Write two outline orders of worship—one for a Sunday morning service and one for a briefer and more informal worship setting. Explain the sequence of worship acts.

Read pages 44-48 of *Word and Table: A Basic Pattern of Sunday Worship for United Methodists*, Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, and I Corinthians 11:23-25.

Optional assignment: Read chapter 2 of *Companion to the Book of Worship* on the Christian year. (See resource list.)

### Evaluation

Since there are only two sessions left, it is important to look carefully at what the class has actually covered, the expressed needs that have still to be dealt with, and your plans for the remaining sessions. There will not be time to cover everything that could be covered. It is important to allow participants to suggest what will be most important and give priority to these concerns.

## SESSION FOUR: PLANNING FOR WORSHIP

### Objectives

1. To help lay speakers understand the basic pattern and meanings of the Lord's Supper.
2. To help lay speakers understand the Christian year and use it in their planning of worship.

### How to Get Started

Continue a presentation of the pattern and orders of service on pages 8-11 of *Word and Table*, beginning with the taking of the bread and cup. Compare the ritual in *The Book of Hymns*, 830-32. Discuss these in the light of the assigned scriptures. Here are some discussion questions.

1. What were Jesus' actions in the Upper Room? How has the church combined these into four? Compare Jesus' actions at Emmaus (Luke 24:30).

2. Which three of these four actions are primarily nonverbal; which one is primarily verbal?

3. What are some of the names by which the Lord's Supper is known? What are some of the names by which the thanksgiving (blessing) over the bread and the cup is known?

4. What are the basic elements in the thanksgiving over the bread and the cup?

5. What are some of the meanings of the Lord's Supper? Which of these meanings do you think United Methodists are most aware of? Least aware of?

6. In your church what happens to attendance on Communion Sundays—does it go up, go down, or stay about the same? If it goes markedly up or down, what do you think are some of the reasons for this?

7. What does Paul mean by taking Communion "in an unworthy manner" and "without discerning the body?" Do you think people who stay away from Communion saying "I don't feel worthy" understand Paul correctly?

8. Ideally, how often do you think a congregation should celebrate the Lord's Supper? If you don't think your church celebrates the Lord's Supper often enough, what are some practical steps that would make more frequent Communion acceptable to the people?

9. What are the alternative ways of serving Communion, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

#### Methods and Activities

In the latter part of the session present the Christian year. Compare the version of the Christian year found in *The Book of Hymns* 674-714 with the version found in *Word and Table*, pages 47-68. Here are some discussion questions.

1. How does the Christian year help in the long-range planning of worship?

2. How can we better celebrate the seasons around Christmas (Advent, Christmastide, Epiphany)?

3. How can we better celebrate the seasons around Easter (Lent, Eastertide, Pentecost)?

4. How can we make the best use of the half of the year between the Day of Pentecost and the beginning of Advent?

5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of following a lectionary?

#### Concluding the Session

Plan for a worship service at the final session. Ask

members of the class to take leadership parts in the service. Close with a prayer circle and benediction.

#### Assignment for the Next Session

Write out four prayers—one each of invocation, of confession, of intercession, of thanksgiving.

Optional assignment: discuss with your pastor the appropriate content, selection, and writing of various kinds of prayers for use in worship.

#### Evaluation

Look carefully at the outline orders of worship turned in by the students and write constructive comments and suggestions on them. Discuss them with the class at the beginning of the last session.

Think through what has been left undealt with in the first four sessions and what should have priority in the last session.

## SESSION FIVE: WHEN YOU ARE LEADING WORSHIP

#### Objectives

To help lay speakers further develop some of the practical skills involved in leading worship.

#### How to Get Started

Discuss and evaluate the orders of worship turned in at the previous session.

#### Methods and Activities

Have each student lead in prayer, using one or more of the prayers he or she has written out as the assignment for this session. Discuss constructively both the composition of the prayers and the way in which each student has led in prayer and how these might be improved.

Have each student read a passage of scripture as he or she would when leading worship. Discuss constructively how the readings might have been done better.

#### Concluding the Session

Pass out evaluation sheets and collect them after giving the students time to fill them in.

You may wish to let the students know that you are available for further help.

Close with the worship service you planned at the previous session. The course should end on a note of worship and inspiration.

#### Evaluation

Read the student evaluations. Review to yourself what you did in this course and make your own evaluation. Make notes that will be useful when you teach the course again, including suggestions to yourself for improving the course.

# UNDERSTANDING AND USING THE BIBLE

Lon A. Speer

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE COURSE

1. To review with lay speakers the development of the Bible and to help them gain an overview of its basic message.
2. To help lay speakers develop their skills in biblical interpretation.
3. To help lay speakers develop skill in using the Bible as a resource in the preparation of sermons, messages, and speeches.

## OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

The overall objective for this study is that lay speakers will grow in their understanding of the Bible and its message and will develop skill in using the Bible as a resource. For this reason the course begins with a study of the growth and development of the Bible, including the process through which the books of both the Old and New Testaments came to be written and finally included in the canon of Scripture. In this study, participants will be introduced to some of the basic themes and messages of several books of the Bible.

In the latter sessions of the study, participants will be helped to develop skill in biblical study and interpretation, dealing with such topics as attitudes conducive to effective Bible study, techniques and methods useful in Bible study, and principles of biblical interpretation.

In the final session participants will be helped to summarize their study by examining the question, What does it mean to approach and read the Bible as the inspired Word of God?

## SUGGESTIONS FOR PLANNING

The textbook for this course is *Introducing the Bible* by William Barclay. It will be essential that every participant in the course obtain and read the text. It is suggested that you begin your preparation by reading both the text and this leader's guide in their entirety. You will also find it helpful to read general articles on the development of the Bible and on the major biblical themes in volumes 1 and 7 of *The Interpreter's Bible* and in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*.

A review of the planning suggestions in the first part of this book will help you plan your approach to the development of the specific session plans.

This guide contains suggestions for five sessions, based on five chapters of the text. Each session plan contains an outline of one chapter in the Barclay book. These outlines contain more than a summary of the content of the book. Within each outline you will find suggested discussion questions and teaching-learning procedures. You will soon realize that there are more discussion and teaching-learning suggestions than you can possibly use in the time that will be available to

you for your sessions. This means that you will need to select carefully from among these suggestions in the light of the needs of your participants and the specific learning goals you develop for each session.

An outline of the content of the text as presented in these session plans can help you teach in several ways. The outline may become the basis for a lecture. It may guide you in your background study. It may serve as a preview or review of the content of a chapter or a session. Since the outline breaks the content of the book into small portions, the outline may serve as the basis for homework assignments or, within the session, for group assignments. The numbers in parentheses in each session plan refer to pages in the Barclay text.

As you read this guide and the text, you will discover that no suggestions are provided for chapter 4 on the Apocrypha. Should you decide to include this chapter, you may wish to study it along with the study of the Old Testament in session two.

## BASIC RESOURCES

Barclay, William. *Introducing the Bible*. Abingdon, 1972.

The Bible:

Revised Standard Version

New English Bible

Good News Bible (Today's English Version)

Blair, Edward P. *Abingdon Bible Handbook*. Abingdon, 1975.

Laymon, Charles M., ed. *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Abingdon, 1974.

## SESSION ONE—THE ANCIENT BOOK

### Objectives

1. To help participants understand and appreciate the unique and special role that the Bible has for us as Christians.
2. To help participants recognize that the importance of the Bible is related to the fact that it is the one place where we find Jesus Christ.
3. To help participants discover the relevance of the Bible for our time in its dealing with personal relationships, those between and among us as persons and between us and God.

### Session Outline

1. We who are Christian view the Bible as the final court of appeal in all controversies about religion. For us this book has final and binding authority (p. 11).
  - a. *A Discussion Question.* What practices and customs within the life of your congregation lift up the Bible? What does your congregation do to indicate the preeminence of the Bible in its faith?

b. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Ask a member of your class to read the words in our *Book of Discipline* about the role of the Bible in the formation of Christian doctrine. See paragraphs 68 and 69 in *The Book of Discipline* (1976). This student should plan to report on these portions of the *Discipline* at the next session. The basic purpose of this report should be to tell the class how United Methodism describes the preeminence of Scripture in its official documents.

2. The Bible is special, extraordinary, and unique. The Bible is a book of outstanding literature (pp. 12-13).

- On the grounds of its beauty as immortal literature the Bible has a right to be called great. But its uniqueness does not lie in its beauty alone.
- A Discussion Question.* What particular passages in the Bible do you treasure most highly for their beauty?
- A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Ask a person who is trained to read poetry aloud to come to your class. This person should be prepared to read aloud several of the more beautiful psalms. The purpose of the reading will be to demonstrate to your class the beauty of the Bible as literature. You may locate such a reader by talking to your local high school or college speech teacher or drama coach. Be careful to avoid asking an ordained minister to do this reading. The standard pulpit tone sometime obscures the freshness of the beauty we ought to hear when the Bible is read aloud.

3. More than immortal literature the Bible is also a book of history. Without the Bible our knowledge of history would be seriously diminished (p. 13).

- As a book of history the Bible may claim to be indispensable, but we must look further in order to understand its claim to be a final and binding authority for faith.
- A Discussion Question.* Name the countries in the Middle East today that must have the Bible in order to know about their own ancient history.
- A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* On the chalkboard place a list of the names of the sixty-six books of the Bible. Ask three members of your class in consultation with one another to circle the names of eight Bible books that are chiefly books of history. Let the class discuss the correctness of their choices. The purpose of this procedure is to highlight the fact that certain books of the Bible are more concerned about history than others. Perhaps the three persons should be allowed to circle no more than one of the four Gospels.

4. From the Bible the scholar gains a knowledge of ancient Hebrew and Greek that he could gain from no other source. This contributes to the Bible's greatness but does not explain the uniqueness of the Bible for faith (pp. 13-14).

a. *A Discussion Question.* Suppose you heard someone say, "You will never understand the Bible until you learn to read Hebrew and Greek." How might you respond? If you would disagree, tell why you would do so.

b. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Obtain a copy of the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. Display these to your class and pass them around for examination. A rabbi can supply you with the Old Testament. Your local library or a local pastor can supply you with the Greek New Testament. If you are unable to find a Greek New Testament, you may be able to find an interlinear New Testament. This type book has lines of Greek printed between lines of English. The purpose of this procedure is to make more concrete, visual, and memorable the idea that the Bible is, in the first place, a book whose languages are ancient and foreign.

5. The Bible is a treasury of ethical wisdom and is unsurpassed as a guide to the good life (pp. 14-15).

- The Bible is full of good counsel, good advice, and practical wisdom about how to live day by day. But no one becomes good simply by hearing good counsel. We must look further in order to discover the unique ability of the Bible to engender and guide faith.
- A Discussion Question.* Where would you look first in the Bible to gain insight when you are facing an ethical dilemma?
- A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Illustrate the ethical wisdom of the Bible by reading responsively from *The Book of Hymns* the acts of praise numbered 593 and 594. Further illustrate the ethical wisdom of the Bible by asking someone to read aloud Job 31.

6. The Bible is a book that has the power to change lives. This fact has been demonstrated time and again throughout history (pp. 15-16).

- A Discussion Question.* When during your life have you observed a person transformed through an encounter with the Bible? Tell about the person, the circumstances, and the change that took place.
- A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Ask each member of your class to interview three persons before the next session. These interviews will be built around the question, In your judgment does the Bible today retain the power it once had to transform lives? Each person who is interviewed should be asked to tell why he or she thinks as they do. Class members should

return to the next session prepared to report the results of these interviews.

- c. The unique authority of the Bible for Christians has a deeper foundation than its demonstrated power to transform lives.
7. The Bible is relevant throughout the ages because it is about personal relationships (pp. 16-17).
  - a. Though customs, morality, and religious practices do change from age to age, personal relationships remain the same.
  - b. The Bible is forever new because it concentrates upon men and women in their relationships to one another and to God.
  - c. *A Discussion Question.* Name several of the outstanding personal relationships described at length in the Bible. Cite examples from both Testaments.
8. Above all other guides the Bible is the supreme authority for Christians because the Bible is the one place where we find Jesus Christ.
  - a. Without Jesus Christ we are unable to love God and our neighbor.
  - b. Without the Bible we are unable to find Jesus Christ.
  - c. The Bible is therefore essential to our faith.
  - d. *A Discussion Question.* How do you feel about the idea that we are unable to love God unless we love him in and through Jesus Christ? Would you be willing to say that love for God is identical to love for Jesus Christ?
9. The Bible becomes revelation for us only when the Holy Spirit within us illuminates the holy page and opens our eyes to its meaning.
  - a. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth of God and enables us to recognize the truth when it confronts us.
  - b. Bible study and prayer are inseparable. Without prayer, Bible study is barren.
  - c. *A Discussion Question.* What is liable to happen when a person undertakes Bible study without prayer and without an openness to the Spirit's leading?
  - d. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Ask each member of the class to compose a written prayer that is a request for the guidance of the Spirit during the course of this unit of study. Share these by reading them aloud.

#### Assignment for the Next Session

Read chapters 1 and 2 of the textbook.

## SESSION TWO—THE MAKING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

#### Objectives

1. To understand the process through which the books of the Old Testament became a part of the canon.
2. To appreciate the books of the Old Testament as

having stood the test of time even before they became accepted as a part of the canon.

3. To be able to identify the kinds of writing that are included in the Old Testament.
4. To be able to describe some of the major themes of the Old Testament and relate them to the concerns of our life today.

#### Session Outline

1. Barclay's second and third chapters are about how the Bible came to be. This session, based on chapter 2, is about the formation of the Old Testament.
2. The Bible is made up of books that are official.
  - a. The list of books that belong in the Bible is called the church's canon (pp. 19-20).
  - b. The early church created this list of books that we now consider authoritative.
  - c. *A Discussion Question.* How might you defend and how might you attack this idea: Because the church created the Bible and because the Bible is the official book for the church, only the church has the right to interpret it?
  - d. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Test your class members in this way. Ask each one, working alone and without a Bible before him or her, to write the names of the books of the Bible. See who is able to come closest to listing all sixty-six books. The purpose of this procedure is to refresh the memories of the students and to help them discover gaps in their knowledge of the contents of the Bible.
3. The Bible is a library of books written over a period of one thousand years (pp. 20-21).
  - a. *A Discussion Question.* In how many ways might a book written in A.D. 1976 differ from a book written in A.D. 976?
  - b. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* On the chalkboard write "The Bible is a library of many books even though we bind them together under one cover." Say to the class, "Many things that are true of any library are true of the Bible as well. What are some of these things?" Let your class volunteer such ideas as, "In a library there are many books written by many different authors." A little thought will show you and your class that you understand the Bible better whenever you remember that it is a library.
4. The Jews divided their sacred writings into three sections. The first of these they call the Law (pp. 22-29).
  - a. The first five books of the Bible as we know it are the Law.
  - b. For the Jew the Law (*Torah*, meaning instruction) is the essence of all true religion.
  - c. The Jews believed that God delivered the Law to Moses verbatim.

- d. The Jews viewed all other Scripture as merely a commentary on the Law.
- e. The first written book to become the word of God for the Jews was the book we call Deuteronomy.
  - (1) Second Kings 22 and 23 tell about the discovery of Deuteronomy in the Temple.
  - (2) A great reform of religion under King Josiah followed upon the canonization of Deuteronomy.
- f. Other books and moral codes that had proved their value through the centuries were soon placed alongside Deuteronomy as God's word to men. These included portions of Exodus and Leviticus that we now call "the covenant code" and "the holiness code."
- g. The first five books of the Bible are more than Law. They are also narrative history.
  - (1) The Jews recorded God's law within the context of a story.
  - (2) The story is the narrative history of how God dealt with Israel as he was forming her into a nation.
- h. The Law (instruction and history) was traditionally ascribed to Moses as its sole author.
  - (1) Close study reveals that the first five books of the Bible could not have been the work of one writer.
  - (2) The Pentateuch is the work of many hands and the product of many centuries.
- i. The whole Pentateuch—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—came to be viewed as God's Holy Word about 400 B.C.
  - (1) The story of that moment may be read in Nehemiah 8–10.
  - (2) Ezra is the great name in the story of the canonization of the Pentateuch.
- j. *A Discussion Question.* What would our religion lack if we knew only that much of God's word as we find in the Law (our first five books)?
- k. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* The end papers of the *Young Readers Bible* (Abingdon Press) are a superb time line of biblical history. Reproduce them on chalkboard or newsprint for your class. In order to understand chapter 2 of Barclay your students need a broad view of Jewish history. The time lines will help give them that view. You as teacher should guide the class through a detailed reading of this time line. Your own readiness to do this may depend upon refreshing your memory of Jewish history. You may do this by reading the two articles in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, pages 1018–31. As you guide your class through the time line, note the way it is laid out vertically. In one column you find the periods of biblical history. In a

second column you find persons who were prominent in biblical history. A third column lists key events, and a fourth column tells about the writings that appeared along the way.

- l. *A Second Teaching-Learning Procedure.* The surest and quickest way to get inside the Jewish love for God's Law is to read Psalm 119. Have your class members read this silently, recalling as they do that one meaning of Law is "the whole of the five books that begin our Bible." Ask the class to note the love, the confidence, the assurance, and the delight that the Law gave the Jew.
- 5. The second of the three divisions of the Old Testament by Jewish reckoning is the Prophets (pp. 29–38).
  - a. Among the prophetic books is a group that we normally consider historical books. In our Bibles they are Joshua, Judges, the books of Samuel, and the books of Kings. The Jews called these the Former Prophets.
    - (1) The Jews viewed history as a demonstration that God's prophets spoke truly.
    - (2) To the Jews history was God in action.
  - b. *A Discussion Question.* How, if at all, can the faithful Christian know God *without* knowing history? In your judgment is history still the voice of God? Tell why you answer as you do.
  - c. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* The Jewish teaching that history corroborates the prophetic oracles may be seen in Psalm 78. The whole of prophecy was based upon this premise: God blesses his people when they are faithful and curses them when they are faithless. This psalm relates the faithlessness of Israel from the time of Moses to the time of David. It also records God's response. The prophetic view of history underlies this psalm. Ask each member of your class to read this psalm silently twice. Then ask these questions for general discussion. What view of history does this psalm presuppose? What adjectives would you choose to describe the God whom you meet in this psalm? How does he resemble and how does he differ from the God whom you meet in the New Testament?
  - d. The Old Testament also includes fifteen books named for prophets, books like Jeremiah and Micah. These the Jews called the Latter Prophets.
  - e. The center of the prophetic message was always ethical monotheism. Amos and Micah were its first spokesmen.
    - (1) Monotheism means there is one God and one God only.
    - (2) Ethical monotheism means that we serve

the one true God only when we join religion and morality.

f. Hosea taught that, at the very least, God's love must be as strong and as persistent as human love. Israel cannot by her faithlessness defeat God's love for her.

g. Isaiah, though he continued the themes of love and justice that we find in Amos, Micah, and Hosea, added his own dominant theme—the holiness of God. These four prophets were all eighth-century prophets.

h. Among the prophets of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., we meet Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Of these the latter two were incomparably the greatest.

(1) Jeremiah and Ezekiel, watching Jerusalem fall before the Babylonians, discovered that religion is more than a national experience.

(2) Religion is personal as well as national.

(3) Simple though it may seem to us today, they were the first to discover that each of us is linked to God, not primarily because we are Jews (or Christians), but chiefly because we are persons.

i. The unknown poet-prophet who wrote the words we know as Isaiah 40–55 added two more insights to the body of prophetic thought. This second Isaiah wrote near the end of the sixth century B.C.

(1) He discovered that all history is in the hand of God and that even the person who has never heard of God may be, without realizing it, the servant of God and an instrument in his hands.

(2) Suffering is not only God's punishment for sin. It is also God's way of redeeming the many through the trials of the few. One faithful person may by his suffering release God's blessings for all humankind.

j. The remaining prophetic books include Haggai, Zechariah, Obadiah, Joel, Malachi, and Jonah.

(1) Of these Jonah is the most important.

(2) Jonah is the one supremely missionary book in the Old Testament.

k. The Jews began to regard the prophets as Scripture no later than 200 B.C.

l. *Questions for Discussion.* What changes did the prophets cause in the Jewish understanding of what God requires of us? What is monotheism? What is ethical monotheism? How can a person be both a monotheist and an idolator? What are the five or six major themes in the prophetic thought of the Old Testament? Relying on your memory alone, which passages do you know best from each of these writers: Amos, Micah, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel? In what senses are we correct when we call Jesus a prophet? If our whole knowledge of God were derived from the Old Testament prophets alone, what would be lacking in our faith?

m. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* This procedure will encourage each of your class members to pay close attention to at least one of the prophets. Ask each class member to select one of the shorter prophetic books. Each member is to read the book selected. The student is then to write a brief letter to its author. Thus one student might read Jonah and write a letter to either Jonah or the unknown person who wrote Jonah. Or a student might write a letter to Amos. These letters may contain questions a student would like to place before the prophet, or they may contain comments on the prophet's judgments. Allow ample time for the reading and writing called for by this procedure. Then have the letters read aloud. As you listen, you will discover many leads that will tell you what the class members care about and puzzle over when they read the prophets.

n. *A Second Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Give each student a copy of the daily newspaper. Ask each student to select and read one of the shorter prophetic books, preferably either Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jonah, Malachi, or the first eleven chapters of Isaiah. After each student has finished reading, he or she should turn through the daily newspaper to locate two or three news items that would call forth the wrath of the prophet who has just been read. The student should look for one news item that best illustrates the type of social problem that angered the prophets. These should be read aloud, and the student should give reasons for thinking that the news read would have a special interest for the prophet he or she has read. This procedure will help the class see analogies between the prophet's writings and the problems facing society today.

6. The Jews referred to the remaining books of the Old Testament as the Writings. These were the last portions to be accepted as God's word (pp. 38-42).

a. The Writings are a miscellaneous collection of independent books. Examples are Psalms, Job, and Esther.

(1) This miscellany includes poetry, stories, history, love songs, dirges, prophecy, wisdom, philosophical theology.

(2) We have in the Writings the religious literature of a nation.

b. The Jews believed that God ceased to inspire Scripture after the time of Ezra, about 400 B.C.

- (1) Many of the Writings were composed after the time of Ezra.
- (2) The authors were often unknown.
- (3) These books were able to become a part of the Jewish canon because the rabbis ascribed their authorship to some great figure of the past (before inspiration ceased). For example, they gave David credit for all the psalms.
- c. The Writings began first to be collected under Nehemiah, who began to collect the psalms. This began a process that was completed five hundred years later in A.D. 90 at the Council of Jamnia, where the contents of the Old Testament was settled by Jewish rabbis for all time. Only then were the Writings wholly official as God's word to Israel.
- d. The Psalms are a part of the Writings. They are the prayer book and the hymnbook of the Temple. Of all the Writings their place in the canon was least disputed.
- e. The three books whose place in the canon was most often disputed were Esther, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes.
- f. Several of the Writings gained their way into the canon because they were used in the liturgies connected with one or more of the great Jewish festivals.
- g. *A Discussion Question.* Which one of the Writings do you know least about? Which one of the Writings do you know the most about? Which one is your favorite? Which one arouses your largest curiosity at this time? Which one arouses your least curiosity?
- h. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Precede and follow your lecture with a test. The tests should be identical. Comparing scores for each individual may give you a clue to the effectiveness of your lecture. Students may also check their own learning by comparing scores before and after. The test should be a matching test. Items listed in one column should contain three surplus items in order to make the test more difficult. In the first or left-hand column list the books that are the Writings. They are Job, Psalms, Song of Solomon, Proverbs, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, First and Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Ruth. In the second column list the following items: History written through the eyes of a priest, the story of how the feast of Purim began, an apocalypse, a philosophical poem, practical wisdom for day-to-day living, a dirge of fallen Jerusalem, a philosophy of pessimistic futility, a hymnbook, a story about the ancestry of David, the story of the great scribe of the Law, a story of the man who began to rebuild Jerusalem after the exile, and a poem

of passionate love. The three surplus items for you to include in this list are these (mix them at random): A book of rules and regulations derived from Moses, a poem about the birth of Jeremiah, and the last will and testament of King Omri.

- i. *An Additional Resource.* You may better prepare to teach about the formation of the Old Testament canon by reading *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary*, pages 1209-13.

#### Assignment for the Next Session

1. Read chapter 3 of the textbook.
2. Ask each class member to prepare a brief devotional meditation based on one of the Psalms. Plan to include one or more of these meditations at an appropriate point in each of the following sessions.

### SESSION THREE—THE MAKING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

#### Objectives

1. To help participants understand the process of development that lead to the writing of the books of the New Testament and the determination of the canon of the New Testament.
2. To help participants see the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.
3. To help participants grow in their understanding of the Christian message as presented in the New Testament and as it can most effectively be presented to persons in our time using the Bible as a source.

#### Session Outline

1. After the death of Jesus, the church took more than three hundred years to complete the New Testament. Why was this so (pp. 45-49)?
  - a. As a child of Judaism, Christianity was a religion with a book, but the book was at first the Old Testament alone.
  - b. Christianity was born into a nonliterary civilization that trusted memory and oral tradition more than the written word.
  - c. Christianity made its initial impact upon poor people who were largely uncultured. They were not oriented to books.
  - d. Even had the church wished in the beginning to produce an authoritative book, book production was extremely expensive in the first centuries of our era.
  - e. So long as the original apostles and eyewitnesses were alive, the church felt little need for a book.
  - f. Because the early church expected Jesus to return in the very near future, there seemed to be little time and little reason to publish the apostolic witness as a book.
- g. *A Discussion Question.* If Christianity prospered for three hundred years without the New

Testament, why do we insist today that it is indispensable?

- h. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Divide the class into groups of five. Give each group of five twenty-seven slips of paper or 3" X 5" note cards, a copy of *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary*, a large piece of poster board, and a tube of rubber cement. The groups are teams, and they will compete as follows. At the word *begin* each team will write the names of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament on the twenty-seven slips of paper. Then, racing to be the first team to finish, they will look up the probable date of composition for each of the twenty-seven books in the commentary. These dates will be entered on the twenty-seven cards as well. Each card will then contain the name of one book of the New Testament and the most probable date of composition for that book. Finally the teams will arrange their cards in the correct order according to dates and place them in that order on the poster board with cement. The team to finish first with the correct answers wins. Notice that each team must use the same commentary. If different commentaries are supplied to different teams, some conflict might arise over the correct most probable date. Note also that though the commentary may give several possible dates for some books, the one date considered most probable by the writer of the commentary is to be used for this competition. The purpose of this procedure is to help persons learn the order in which the books of the New Testament were written and to become familiar with the time span involved.
- i. *If You Want to Know More.* The formation of the New Testament canon is discussed in detail in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, volume A-D, pages 520-32.

2. Eventually it became necessary for the church to produce a literature of its own. Why was this so (pp. 49-51)?
  - a. The death of the original apostles and eyewitnesses made a Christian literature necessary.
  - b. Once Christianity left Palestine and began to penetrate Roman culture and civilization, it entered a society that was literate and literary.
  - c. The worldwide missionary purposes of the church required a written record of the story the church tells.
  - d. The church needed an official record of the career of Jesus in order to combat false teachings about him.
  - e. A book became more plausible as soon as the

church learned that the Second Coming might be delayed indefinitely.

- f. *A Discussion Question.* How does your congregation use the Bible in its mission, ministry, and outreach?
- g. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Form your class into a circle and ask the entire group to role play this situation. "You are a Council on Ministries in a local church. You are discussing the role of the Bible in the life of your church. Some of you are content with things as they are. Some of you would like to make the Bible more prominent and influential in the life of your church. Your purpose as a council is to evaluate and improve the use of the Bible in your church." After this role play, discuss the new ideas that emerged.
3. How were the four Gospels written and what kind of books are they (pp. 51-55)?
  - a. During the forty years that followed the death of Jesus and that preceded the writing of the first Gospel, the deeds and sayings of Jesus were accurately remembered by individuals and by the church.
  - b. These memories took on certain standard forms.
    - (1) Paradigms
    - (2) Tales
    - (3) Sayings
    - (4) Legends
    - (5) Myths
  - c. Memory was a far more reliable and respected faculty among ancient peoples than it is among us.
  - d. The Gospels are made up of materials used by the early church for preaching and teaching.
  - e. The Gospels are not biographies of Jesus; they are windows into his mind and heart and character. They are more like portraits than photographs.
  - f. *A Discussion Question.* Which of the four Gospels do you personally read most often and why? List the qualities of that Gospel that make it appealing to you above the other three.
  - g. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Ask seven persons to prepare in advance a panel presentation. Their topic will be "The Literary Relations Among the Gospels." Their resource will be the article by that title in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, pages 1129-35. Within that article are seven major headings, each identified by a roman numeral. They are these: (1) Each Gospel separate and complete, (2) Similarities and differences, (3) The period of oral tradition, (4) The use of written sources, (5) Mark, the first complete Gospel, (6) The writing of Matthew and Luke, and (7) John and the

**Synoptic Gospels.** Each of these sections is quite brief. Each person will summarize in a very brief lecture (two to five minutes) the content of the section assigned to him. The teacher of the class will introduce the panel by using the ideas in the paragraphs in the article that precede the first roman numeral. The purpose of this procedure is to add substantial information to the brief information that is included in the Barclay book. It will also give seven members of the class a chance to study intensively and to share in the leadership of the session.

4. The *Acts of the Apostles* is a history of the early church (pp. 55-56).
  - a. *Acts* is the story of how the church expanded.
  - b. The story of how the church expanded is the story of how the Holy Spirit filled the Christian community and guided its leaders.
  - c. From *Acts* we learn the substance of early Christian sermons, and we are able to determine the early Christian message.
  - d. The early Christian message may be summarized in five points. Barclay gives these five points on page 56.
  - e. The early church was dominated by two great thoughts: the resurrection and the Holy Spirit.
  - f. *A Discussion Question.* If you were to write a five-point summary of the Christian message as you understand it, how would it differ from the summary Barclay gives?
  - g. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Divide the class into small groups of four to seven members each. Supply each class member with *The Book of Hymns (The Methodist Hymnal)*. On the chalkboard write the five points that are Barclay's summary of the early Christian message. (See page 56.) Ask each work group to find in *The Book of Hymns* those five hymns that best illustrate the five points in the Barclay summary. For example, the first point is: "The new age has dawned, and it has dawned through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ." Which hymn in our hymnal best restates this ancient conviction? With each of the four remaining points a similar question can be asked. Which hymn says this best for us today? After the groups have selected their hymns to the satisfaction of all group members, reassemble the whole class and share the results. Some discussion may be allowed of the decisions reached. The purpose of this procedure is to reinforce the memory of the early Christian message upon the minds of your students.
5. If we follow the history of the New Testament in the making, we find certain milestones along the

way as the church moved to complete its canon (pp. 57-65).

- a. The books of the New Testament took about seventy years to write, but the canon did not assume its present, fixed form until A.D. 367.
- b. The misunderstanding of the Christian faith as represented by the Gnostics and by Marcion forced the church to decide two things:
  - (1) What is our attitude toward the Old Testament?
  - (2) Which books really belong in the New Testament?
- c. Against the views of Marcion, the church affirmed its faith in the Old Testament. The God who speaks there is the same God who speaks through Jesus Christ.
- d. By A.D. 170 the church had a tentative though unofficial list of books that belong in the New Testament.
- e. Along the way the church also decided that the quota of sacred books was complete and that no more New Testament books could be written.
  - (1) A heretic Christian named Montanus appeared near the end of the second century claiming to be the Paraclete promised by Jesus in the Gospel of John. Montanus offered new "revelations" that would supercede the revelation in Jesus Christ.
  - (2) Against Montanus the church declared that in Jesus Christ revelation is complete. No new books are needed in the New Testament. The canon is closed.
- f. Each book admitted into the New Testament was placed there on the grounds of apostolic authority. Only books written by apostles or apostolic men were allowed in the canon. The truth of the Christian revelation was ascribed to eyewitness testimony.
- g. The place of the New Testament books in the church's life was further secured by their use in public worship. They were fully established when they became a part of the church's liturgy.
- h. During the third century and the early part of the fourth century, scholars gave careful attention to the question of authenticity, dividing the New Testament books into three groups—the universally accepted, the disputed, and the spurious.
- i. The complete list of New Testament books as we know them was published for the first time in A.D. 367 by Athanasius.
- j. Christians like Luther continued to differentiate between the books of the New Testament as to quality. Some books preach Christ far

more plainly than others, Romans more plainly than James, for example.

k. For sixteen hundred years no book has been added and no book has been taken away.

l. *A Discussion Question.* The Holy Spirit is God's agent in revelation. How can we say that revelation is complete and that the canon is closed without shutting our ears to the work of the Spirit in our day?

m. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Plan a debate. Establish two teams composed of class members. Ask them to debate this topic: Resolved, that the church erred when it chose to close the canon and to declare revelation ended. Let half the class members work with one team to prepare a case that supports the resolution. Let the other half of the class work with the other team to prepare a case that denies the resolution. Conduct the debate according to standard debating procedures. The purpose of this plan is to promote energetic consideration of the church's wisdom in closing the canon.

#### Assignment for the Next Session

1. Prepare a short statement summarizing your understanding of the Christian message as proclaimed by the early church.
2. Read chapter 5 of the textbook.

## SESSION FOUR—HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

#### Objectives

1. To help participants identify some appropriate purposes for Bible study.
2. To help participants develop an understanding of some attitudes that are helpful in Bible study.
3. To introduce the participants to some helpful approaches to study of the Bible.
4. To help participants develop an understanding of some essential principles and tasks in biblical interpretation.

#### Session Outline

This session plan is based on chapter 5 in *Introducing the Bible*.

1. Our study of the Bible must be reverent (pp. 89-92).
  - a. We must study an ordinary book for information, but we study the Bible in order to find life and to encounter God.
  - b. We must always begin our Bible study with prayer.
  - c. We may understand the Bible only when the Spirit of God is active within us as we study.
  - d. The contrast between Erasmus and Luther illustrates the difference between the detached methods of the scholar and the methods of the Christian.

- e. *A Discussion Question.* How is it possible to study the Bible both reverently and critically?
- f. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* *The Interpreter's Bible*, volume 1, contains an article entitled "The Study of the Bible," by George Arthur Buttrick. (See pages 165-71.) You should use this article to supplement the chapter by Barclay. You may wish at this point to present a five-minute lecture based on sections 5 and 6 of that article.
2. We must study the Bible within the fellowship of the church (pp. 92-93).
  - a. We must let our Bible study rest upon the tradition of scholarship and devotion that we find only within the church.
  - b. The truth of God that we find in the Bible is a truth about community.
    - (1) We find that truth only as we study together within the Christian fellowship.
    - (2) No one of us can find the truth alone; no one of us needs to find the truth alone.
  - c. *A Discussion Question.* What are the advantages of group study over individual study?
  - d. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Supply members of your class with pencil and paper. Ask them to number the left-hand margin of their papers one through five. Announce that you will read five statements aloud. They are to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement. They are to do this by marking an "A" or a "D" opposite the numbers they have placed in the left-hand margin. The five statements that you will read aloud are these:
    - (1) No person can arrive at the truth alone.
    - (2) We must rely upon the tradition of the church in order to understand the Bible correctly.
    - (3) God works more powerfully through groups than through individuals.
    - (4) Our conclusions about the Bible are not valid until we have checked them with the fellowship of the church.
    - (5) God speaks more powerfully through the Bible than through any other medium.
 Ask class members to share and to discuss their responses. The purpose of this procedure is to let class members compare their opinions with those opinions expressed in the text by Barclay.
  3. We must study the Bible honestly, seeking the truth we find there instead of seeking to prove an opinion we already hold (p. 93).
    - a. We may study the Bible honestly only when we go to it with an open mind, willing to listen and learn, waiting to hear the word that God will address to us.
    - b. *A Discussion Question.* What habits and attitudes do you bring to the Bible that get in the way of your hearing God's voice?
    - c. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Divide the class

into groups of two. Have the two persons in each pair interview each other. Each interview will be based on these two sentences: (1) Tell me of a time when God spoke to you through the Bible. (2) What about your life-situation at that time made you receptive to God's voice?

4. We must study the whole of Scripture and not selected parts only (pp. 93-94).

- By selecting only our favorite verses, we may prove a point, win an argument, or enter a debate, but we will not become students of the Bible.
- We must study the whole of Scripture in the light of Jesus Christ, *his* whole mind and character.
- A Discussion Question.* To what degree, if any, are you disturbed by apparent contradictions in the Bible?

5. We must study the Bible with our whole selves, heart, soul, strength, and mind (pp. 94-96).

- We cannot understand the Bible through reason alone, but neither will we understand the Bible if we leave our minds behind us.
- We must use our minds to understand the meaning of words, which are the Spirit's medium.
- Bible study is the work of both a devoted spirit and a toiling mind. God will not spoon-feed us.
- A Discussion Question.* Would you agree that, all other things being equal, an educated person is more likely to hear God speak through the Bible than an uneducated person?
- A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Illustrate the need for disciplined word study by asking your class members to read Romans 5-8 and list all the words they do not fully understand. After your class members have made these lists, have them read aloud. The lists will stand as vital proof of Barclay's point: Bible study means word study by disciplined minds. The purpose of this exercise is to show how true Barclay's contention is, that the mind of man and the mind of God meet only when the mind of man is actively struggling toward the truth.

6. We must study the Bible in order to discern the will of God so that we may act on his behalf. Bible study ought always to lead to action (pp. 96-97).

- A Discussion Question.* Why is Bible study among Christians always more than a hobby and always more than a pleasant pastime?
- A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Ask a qualified person, probably a pastor, to report on the article entitled "How Does God Speak to Us Through the Bible?" You will find this in *Existence and Faith*, by Rudolf Bultmann (Meridian Books, 1960).

7. We must study the Bible in order to find out what

it means. We must beware of finding there only those meanings that we import.

- A common mistake in Bible study is the excessive and unbridled use of allegorical interpretation.
- We must never neglect the simple, literal meaning of the Bible in order to search for hidden meanings through allegory.
- If you treat the Bible as a collection of allegories, you can make it mean almost anything you wish it to mean.
- We must look for the meaning that was in the mind of the writer originally and not settle for the meaning that our own ingenuity puts into the text.
- A Discussion Question.* Many sectarian religious groups teach that the Bible is a vessel of hidden meanings that are known only to their initiates. What dangers are there in the view that the true meaning of the Bible is esoteric, hidden, or essentially mysterious?
- A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Take three to five pieces of paper. These may be full pieces of typing paper or construction paper. Crease each piece down the center lengthwise. Open the page flat. Drop a blob of ink in the center. Fold the paper along the crease and rub it with your hand in a random movement. Open flat and allow it to dry. Prepare several sheets of paper in this way. Post them where your class members may view them easily. Looking at them one by one with your class, ask persons to tell you what they see. Their imaginations will roam freely and each person will see "his own thing." After a free and possibly funny time with this impressionistic exercise, lecture on how the allegorical interpretation of the Bible resembles "reading ink blots."
- The basic technique in Bible study is word study (pp. 101-3).
  - Barclay shows the value of word study by discussing two words, *arrabón* and *parakletós*.
  - We can discover the meaning of a Bible passage only if we begin by asking the meaning of individual words.
  - When the leader of the group does not know Hebrew and Greek, the group must depend upon commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and multiple translations of the text.
  - A Discussion Question.* What experience have you had using Bible dictionaries and commentaries?
  - A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Collect and display several books that students might use when the need for word study arises. Include Bible dictionaries, Bible commentaries, and Bible word books. The bibliography on pages 149 and 150 of the Barclay book might be your

guide. Look at the books in advance so that you will be able to describe in general terms the type resource that each one represents.

9. When we study the Bible, we must use a good modern translation (pp. 103-6).

- The King James Version is not a satisfactory Bible for study purposes.
  - Many of its passages are no longer intelligible to us because words have altered their meaning.
  - The language of the King James translation is solemn, dignified, beautiful, and archaic. It no longer reproduces the atmosphere of the original languages, especially in the New Testament.
  - The scholars who translated the Bible in 1611 had access to only a few ancient manuscripts, and these manuscripts were less reliable than those we possess today.
- The King James Bible will be treasured forever for its beauty and for its enduring influence, but it should be set aside when our chief goal is understanding.
- A Discussion Question.* Why have some groups within the church resisted the use of modern translations? What values have they sought to defend by resisting?
- A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Collect and display several modern translations of the Bible. These should include at the very least the New English Bible, the Revised Standard Version, and one or more of the following: the Jerusalem Bible, the Moffat translation, the Smith-Goodspeed translation, and the Good News Bible. A convenient listing and description of modern translations may be found in *Abingdon Bible Handbook*, by Edward P. Blair, pages 38-56. Read carefully the comments on pages 53-54 about *The Living Bible*, whose popularity far exceeds its quality. Each of the translations you display will have a foreword that explains the occasion for the translation and the purpose of the translators.

10. We must seek to understand each biblical passage in relation to its background and within its context (pp. 107-12).

- We must know the historical setting of each event if we are to learn its meaning.
- Laws, proverbs, parables, and other teachings have meaning within their original context. We will misunderstand the sayings until we know the context.
- Barclay illustrates these principles by telling us about the historical context within which Jesus cleansed the Temple.
- We must read biblical poetry as poetry and not mistake it for prose.
- A Discussion Question.* What new insights do you gain when you read about the historical background for the cleansing of the Temple?

f. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Divide the class into four groups. Each group will be asked to discuss the cleansing of the Temple from one point of view. The first group will discuss the cleansing from the point of view of a devout pilgrim to a Temple festival. The second group will discuss the cleansing from the point of view of a Temple priest who manages the Temple treasury. The third group will discuss the cleansing from the point of view of Jesus. After several minutes, each group will appoint a spokesman who will speak in the first person about the cleansing. The topic will be "How I view what happened in the Temple today." From the first group one person will speak as though he were a pilgrim. From the second group one person will speak as though he were the Temple treasurer. From the third group one person will speak as though he were a money-changer. From the fourth group one person will speak as though he were Jesus. The small group discussions have as their purpose coaching and preparing these spokesmen. The purpose of this procedure is to help the group enter more fully into the historical context of a New Testament event in order better to understand the contribution of such knowledge to biblical interpretation.

11. We must read the Bible as a book that describes the unfolding of revelation (pp. 112-27).

- Within the Bible we can observe the development of ideas and insights. Man's grasp of revelation grows from age to age. The Bible was written across many ages.
- God led the minds of men and women from less to more, from lower to higher, from the first faint glimmerings of insight into the full blaze of knowledge that comes with Jesus Christ.
- God's revelation developed as the human capacity to receive it developed.
- We need not be surprised, embarrassed, or threatened in our faith when we find ideas in the Bible that are less than Christian. We need not defend them or explain them away.
- We may observe that revelation grew and developed if we trace in the Bible the history of such ideas as were used to answer these four questions.
  - How do I show my religion?
  - How do I protect my religion?
  - What is it that I ought to give God?
  - What lies beyond death?
- A Discussion Question.* How might you explain and defend this idea: We understand God best

when we think of him, not as a Judge or King, but as a Teacher?

12. We are more likely to understand the Bible if we understand the general world view of the persons who wrote it. The world view of biblical writers differed considerably from our world view (pp. 127-32).

- They viewed the earth as the fixed center of the whole created order.
- They saw demons and sin as the causes of sickness.
- They thought in pictures.
- We may accept their spiritual insights without adopting their world view. Nevertheless, we must learn to get behind their picture-thinking that we may reach the spiritual kernel their pictures house.
  - Time and again our task in studying the Bible is to get at the timeless truth behind the temporary picture.
  - Barclay illustrates this last point by discussing the story of Creation, the story of Adam's fall, and the temptations of Christ in the wilderness.
  - We must never argue about the literal physical truth of biblical pictures. We must rather seek the enduring spiritual truth they convey.
- A Discussion Question.* How would you distinguish between taking the Bible literally and taking it seriously?
- A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Prepare an illustrated lecture on this section of Barclay. In your lecture spell out the archaic features of the biblical world view. Illustrate your lecture with a poster that reproduces the drawing on page 703 of *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, volume A-D. The drawing shows the Old Testament conception of the world. The difference between modern world views and biblical world views come across strongly when students view this drawing.

13. Barclay closes this chapter with three brief admonitions.

- Read the Bible in long sections.
- Do not let those portions that you cannot understand dissuade you from further study.
- Read systematically and regularly.

#### Assignment for the Next Session

- Have each group member write a sermon outline using as the topic one of the four questions listed under 11e on page 32. These outlines may draw on the exposition in Barclay. Have them posted about the room at the beginning of the next session. The purpose of this procedure is to give class members practice writing sermon outlines and to give them insight in one type of sermon

outline, that type that traces the development of an idea within Scripture.

- Read chapter 6 in the textbook.

## SESSION FIVE—THE INSPIRED BOOK

### Objectives

- To help participants develop an understanding of what it means to approach and read the Bible as the inspired Word of God.
- To help participants understand how God reveals himself in actions and events and to see the Bible as the record of that revelation.
- To help participants understand that the supreme importance of the Bible is that in it we find Jesus Christ.
- To help participants develop skill in using their biblical understanding as a resource for the preparation of speeches, sermons, and messages.

### Session Outline

This session is based on chapter 6 of *Introducing the Bible*.

- What do we mean when we say that the Bible is inspired or when we say that the Bible is the Word of God (pp. 137-38)?
  - Some people say that God himself wrote this book. They mean that every word, syllable, and letter, every page, paragraph, and sentence is the writing of God himself.
  - A Discussion Question.* Why are some people drawn to the idea that God himself wrote the Bible and that it is therefore infallible, faultless, and without defect or contradiction? Psychologically, what seems to be the appeal of this view?
  - A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Divide the class into groups. Let each group have three to five persons. Ask the members of each group, working as a team, to construct as many arguments as they can to support the truth and the importance of the idea that God himself wrote the Bible and that only when we believe that idea do we truly believe that the Bible is the Word of God. Reassemble the class into one group and share the arguments thought of in each group.
- Thoughtful Christians must reject the idea that God is in some direct sense the author of the Bible. There are several plain reasons why the Bible cannot be the verbatim word of God (pp. 138-43).
  - The early manuscripts were all copied by hand, and in the copying changes and errors crept in. Even if the original manuscript had been the verbatim word of God, it is now lost and beyond recovery.
  - The biblical writers were much more than passive instruments through whom the Holy

Spirit breathed. They were not merely pens in the hand of God. Each biblical writer expressed his personality through his writings and told of God's revelation in his own way.

- c. Among the four Gospels we find variations, discrepancies, and even contradictions as the gospel writers tell us about the same event or repeat for us the same saying or teaching. Divine dictation of the text is hardly compatible with these facts.
- d. We find a few examples of simple error in the Scripture.
- e. Because revelation unfolds and ideas develop, some portions of the Bible, even within the writing of one man like Paul, give conflicting counsel.
- f. *A Discussion Question.* Is our appreciation for God apt to grow or shrink if we admit that he does not use men and women as mere instruments who respond to him passively whenever he wishes to communicate his word to us? Tell why you answer as you do.
- g. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Your group needs to understand how our Bible came to us. You might ask one or more members of your class to review the information in *Abingdon Bible Handbook*, by Edward P. Blair, on pages 354-67. The article there is called "The Manuscripts and the Search for the True Text."

3. What ideas might be used to compose a positive statement about the inspiration of the Bible (pp. 143-46)?

- a. In the Bible God and persons meet. The Bible is uniquely the meeting place for the Spirit of God and the spirit of humankind.
- b. Inspiration means the Spirit of God connecting with the mind of persons.
- c. Even though we are both the creation of God and the living image of God, we are also free to turn away from God. We are free to sin. We do sin—universally.
- d. God calls sinful men and women back to himself through the agency of other human persons whom we know as prophets. A prophet is a person who brings to other persons the voice of God.
  - (1) The prophet is the conscience of the nation.
  - (2) The prophet speaks because he or she must.
  - (3) The prophet is privy to the inner counsels of God. The prophet communicates more than his or her own opinion.
  - (4) The prophet knows God because he or she loves him. Because the prophet loves him, he or she listens to him and understands

him. The prophet proves his or her love by obedience. The prophet proves his or her understanding by the truth of the proclamation he or she brings.

- e. Barclay offers this definition of an inspired book. "An inspired book, a book which is the word of God, is a book which effects a connection between God and man, thereby correcting the human situation, which has gone wrong. It is written by a man who knows God, because he loves God, and whose love has issued in an obedience which fits him to be the instrument of God" (p. 146).
- f. *A Discussion Question.* As you read what Barclay says when he defines *prophet*, do you believe he is speaking only of persons whom we meet in the Bible and not elsewhere? Explain your answer.
- g. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Divide your class into small groups for discussion. Write these three questions on the chalkboard (or otherwise post them for all to see): What evidence can you cite from the Bible to support the ideas that (1) the prophets were the conscience of their nation, (2) the prophets were speaking the Word of God because they had to speak and had no choice to do otherwise, (3) the prophets had been admitted to the inner counsel of God? After the groups have gathered biblical evidence, ask them to share their points of view. For this procedure, you might place a one-volume Bible commentary and a one-volume Bible dictionary into the hands of each group to aid their research. The purpose of this procedure is to discover the biblical evidence for the truth of Barclay's essay.

4. Most of what prophets have to say interpret historical events. They speak. They interpret. God is revealed as active in and through events.

- a. The supreme event is the coming, the career, and the victory of Jesus Christ.
- b. The supreme importance of the Bible is that in it and nowhere else we find Jesus Christ.
- c. The climax of the Barclay book is his four-sentence summary of his answer to the question, "What do we mean when we say that the Bible is the Word of God?" (See pages 147-48.)

*d. A Discussion Question.* Why is it that we can say without qualification or hesitation that all men and women need the Bible?

- e. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Ask each class member to share with the whole group the single most important new insight that he or she has gained during the study of the Barclay text or as a result of these class sessions.

- f. Additional background reading for this session, which may be important for either the teacher or for selected students, will be found under the title "The Word of God," by L. Harold DeWolf, in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, pages 994-98.
- g. *A Teaching-Learning Procedure.* Ask each class member to develop an outline for a speech or sermon, showing how biblical materials can be used as a resource in the development of the presentation.

### Additional Resources

#### Commentaries and Dictionaries

- Barclay, William, ed. *The Daily Study Bible*, 17 vols. Westminster Press, 1957-61.
- Buttrick, George A., ed. *The Interpreter's Bible*. 12 volumes. Abingdon, 1952-57.
- . *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 volumes. Abingdon, 1962, 1976.
- Miller, Madeleine S., and J. Lane. *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. Harper & Row, 1973.

#### General Aids to Bible Study

- Anderson, Bernhard W. *Understanding the Old Testament*. Prentice-Hall, 1957.
- Fosdick, Harry E. *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*. Harper & Row, 1965.
- Keck, Leander E. *Taking the Bible Seriously*. Abingdon, 1969.
- Kee, Howard Clark and Young, Franklin W. *Understanding the New Testament*. Prentice-Hall, 1965.
- Ryan, Roy. *Planning and Leading Bible Study*. Discipleship Resources, Nashville, 1973.
- Weaver, Horace R. *Getting Straight About the Bible*. Abingdon, 1975.

#### A Cassette Tape Program

- Barclay, William. *Barclay Introduces the Bible*. abingdon audio-graphics, 1976. A set of two cassette tapes and leader's guide containing six lectures by William Barclay on the same topics that he treats in each of the six chapters of the textbook.

## BASIC CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

Harold K. Bales

### OBJECTIVES FOR THE COURSE

1. To help lay speakers develop an increased understanding of basic Christian beliefs.
2. To help lay speakers understand the traditional United Methodist emphasis and approaches to theology.
3. To help lay speakers develop skill in articulating their personal faith understandings.

### OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

This course has been planned to help participants grow in their understanding of the Christian faith and in their ability to share that faith through their activities as lay speakers.

It is based upon the book *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian*, by Emerson Colaw. The chapters in the textbook were the basis of sermons presented to his congregation by Dr. Colaw during a period of time when they were also engaged in a study of the Doctrinal Statement adopted by the 1972 General Conference.

Completion of this study will thus enable participants to clarify and develop their understanding of basic Christian beliefs and will help them to do so in the context of the theological discussions occurring in The United Methodist Church.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR PLANNING

Leading a course for lay speakers is an exciting opportunity! As you lead the participants in this

experience of growth and learning, you too will find this a time of growth and learning. This is a pilgrimage toward greater understanding and competence for all who are involved.

Begin your preparation for this course by reading in its entirety the basic text, *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian*, and part 2 of *The Book of Discipline*, "Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements." You will also find it helpful to review the first section of this book of leader's guides to develop your plan for preparing the specific session plans.

During the sessions persons will be given opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of the content of the material as well as improve competence at preparing and delivering brief messages. It is important that each participant have frequent opportunity to share these messages with the larger group and receive some constructive feedback. You may want to request each student to keep a notebook during the course in which are recorded:

1. Class notes
2. Insights gained from readings
3. The brief messages written for delivery at the sessions.

At the conclusion of the course, you may want to review and comment constructively on the content of each participant's notebook.

Remember, personal interaction in the group is important to enable learning to happen. Encourage dialogue, but don't let any one person dominate the

conversation. The suggested activities combine mini-lectures and conversation. You will want to be sensitive to the need for a balance of both these ingredients in each session.

Don't forget the importance of the setting for productive sessions. Choose a room where chairs can be arranged informally and moved easily. Remember to provide for periodic breaks in the sessions for refreshments and visits to rest rooms. Be alert for signs of fatigue and monitor the group carefully to avoid getting bogged down on one exercise and forfeiting the opportunity to experience others.

#### **BASIC RESOURCES**

Colaw, Emerson. *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian*. Tidings, 1972.  
*Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements: Part II of "The Book of Discipline,"* 1972. Reprinted by Graded Press.

## **SESSION ONE: HOW WE BELIEVE!**

#### **Objective**

To help lay speakers understand how persons struggle most creatively with the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. The emphasis will be on the unique, Wesleyan approach to thinking theologically.

#### **Preparation**

Because this is the first session and the students will not have had opportunity to prepare with directed readings, you will need to make a presentation of the basic material for the session. Foundation material for this initial presentation is provided later in this chapter.

Your preparation for this presentation should include mastery of the concepts contained in:

1. *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian*, chapter 1.
2. *The Character of a Methodist* by John Wesley.
3. *Essential United Methodist Beliefs* by James Hares. (See resource list.)
4. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 1976, ¶ 69.
5. First Corinthians 13.

Do not be frightened by this list of readings. All are short readings. Each reinforces the other at basic points and will be a very worthwhile investment of your preparation time and energy. In your initial presentation, you will want to help students:

1. Appreciate the importance of theological reflection.
2. Discover how United Methodists have traditionally struggled with the great doctrines of the Christian faith.
3. Understand that "believing" is an ever-changing journey with the living God, not merely the intellectual mastery of an idea about God.

In preparation for the first session you will need to provide:

1. Bibles

2. 3" X 5" index cards
3. Pencils
4. Newsprint and felt-tip pens or chalkboard and chalk
5. Course description for each student listing dates and times of sessions, topics to be explored, and readings recommended for each session.
6. Textbooks for the course if students have not already purchased them in the course of registration. The text, *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian* by Emerson Colaw, is available from Cokesbury.

#### **How to Get Started**

1. Open the session with a prayer of invocation.
2. Introduce yourself and invite the students to introduce one another to the whole group. Here's how. First ask persons to turn to a neighbor and, taking no more than thirty seconds each, discover some basic facts about each other. Then going around the group, ask each person to introduce his or her neighbor to the whole group. You be the timekeeper and restrict introductions to thirty seconds each.
3. Give an overview of the course. Distribute the printed course description. Give a very brief comment about your particular concerns in teaching the course. Call attention to the textbook and tell where it is available. Explain about assignments and ask students to bring their Bibles to each session of the course.
4. Invite students to share their particular concerns or questions. Have someone record the comments on newsprint or chalkboard. Be certain these concerns are not lost during the course. Deal with them at the points where they are most clearly related to the planned agenda. If they are not clearly related to the objectives of the course, be careful not to allow them to steer the class off course.

#### **Initial Presentation**

To supplement your reading in preparation for the first session, the following outline is offered to help you organize some basic concepts worth including in the presentation:

1. *Every Christian is a theologian*. Because Christians identify themselves with God and think about God, it is accurate to say that to some degree every Christian is a theologian. Certainly lay speakers are "thinkers about God" and ought to be profoundly committed to clarifying their thoughts about God. Effective speaking demands it. A life of discipleship requires constant learning about the source of life. Because every Christian is a theologian, theology becomes a very personal enterprise. Throughout the centuries, understandings of certain towering truths about God and his activity in the world have become commonly held by most Christians. Nevertheless, because think-

ing about God is intensely personal, we have as many variations of thought as we have believers, even about historic doctrines.

Because we have many ways of perceiving and talking about God, we must discover how to cope with differences of opinion regarding the gospel. One of the unique qualities of United Methodism is the historic insistence that *differences of opinion are legitimate when held in the context of Christian love.*

John Baillie has said that the bit of road that requires most to be illuminated is the point where it forks. The fork in the road where United Methodists take a different path from many other groups is in holding our opinions subordinate to that which Paul calls the most abiding thing of all—love.

In his sermon “The Catholic Spirit,” John Wesley says: “Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt we may. Herein all the children of God may write, not notwithstanding these smaller differences.”

Though we cannot all think alike, we must not be tempted to refrain from thinking at all. Our ministries must emerge out of our best thought about who God is and what he is saying to us today. As we reflect on and talk about our basic beliefs, we can appreciate our differing perceptions while celebrating our love for one another.

2. *We have four guidelines for reflecting on and constructing doctrines or basic Christian beliefs.* When a United Methodist thinks theologically, he or she applies the following questions to the issue at hand:

- a. Is it consistent with Scripture?
- b. Is it consistent with the historic tradition of the Christian church?
- c. Is it confirmed by one's personal experience of God?
- d. Is it supported by reason?

These guidelines enable every United Methodist to theologize with confidence. The use of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason in support of one another help us explore, evaluate, and either accept or reject new insights as well as established doctrines.

Albert Outler has described John Wesley as a folk theologian who stood in a long, honorable line of great Christian thinkers. Wesley examined, evaluated, and appropriated whatever wisdom he could find in secular society. This he could do effectively and with integrity to the gospel when he used the four basic guidelines. We stand in that same tradition of free inquiry in search of greater clarity about truth. As we continue to have new experiences, we gain new insights that, coupled with the witness of the Scripture and the historic doctrines of the church, help make our testimony and ministry pertinent to our world today.

## Group Activity

Involve the participants in a brief activity to help them firmly grasp the guidelines for examining and developing basic beliefs. Here are two possible ways to accomplish this:

1. Divide the participants into four groups, each group with a convenor and a reporter.

Group A will be the *Scripture Group.*

Group B will be the *Tradition Group.*

Group C will be the *Experience Group.*

Group D will be the *Reason Group.*

Announce the proposition: “God is a loving God.” Now ask each group to reflect on the proposition in terms of the guidelines indicated by their group title. The convenors are to facilitate the discussion. At the end of ten minutes of dialogue in small groups, the larger group will reconvene and each reporter will give a two-minute summary of the findings of his or her small group.

2. Give each person a Bible, 3” X 5” index card, and a pencil. Announce the proposition: “God is a loving God.” Then invite students to do one or more of the following:

- a. Locate a biblical passage that supports or denies the proposition.
- b. Identify a way the wisdom (tradition) of the church either supports or refutes the proposition.
- c. Identify a personal experience that either supports or refutes the proposition.
- d. Apply the criterion of reason to the proposition.

When all have had opportunity to do at least one of the activities above, lead the participants in an informal sharing of the findings.

## Concluding the Session

1. Review the basic concepts of the initial presentation. Deal with any questions participants may have.

2. Give the assignments for the next session.

3. Conclude the session with a prayer of gratitude.

## Assignment for the Next Session

1. Ask the participants to read chapters 2, 3, and 4 of Colaw's *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian.*
2. Ask each participant to prepare a very short (200-300 words) word picture describing God. Each person should use a vivid image such as father, creator, potter, shepherd, and so forth. These should be word pictures that would be effective illustrations in a sermon.

## Evaluation

1. How do you feel about the quality of the total experience?  
Negative      Positive      Very Good
2. How do you rate your own contribution?  
Disappointing      Competent      Excellent

## **SESSION TWO: BEGINNING WITH GOD!**

## Objective

To help lay speakers increase their understanding of the doctrine of God and develop the ability to present their understanding in ways that communicate effectively to others.

## Preparation

Prior to convening the class, ask two persons to be prepared to offer prayers during the session. Ask one to offer an opening prayer, the other a closing prayer.

## How to Get Started

1. Begin the session by asking the designated person to offer a prayer of invocation.
2. Introduce the session with a statement about the doctrine of God as the most appropriate beginning point for examining basic Christian beliefs. Example: Christian belief basically begins with God. All else follows this. Our quest for clarity about God is a pilgrimage of both faith and intellect and this class is just a brief part of our continuing journey.
3. Begin the work of the session by dealing directly with the content of the reading assignment. You may approach this in many ways. Here are two possibilities:
  - a. Ask participants if they have any reactions to the content of the reading assignment. Record the comments and questions on newsprint or chalkboard. This will enable you to be certain they are addressed at some time during the session. Proceed then to engage the group in dialogue regarding the questions and comments.
  - b. Make a very brief (four-six minutes) statement about the Trinitarian approach most Christians have towards understanding who God is and how he works in the world. Each of the chapters in the text deals with one aspect of this understanding (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

Then devote equal amounts of discussion time to dialogue on each chapter. Conclude the dialogue by summing up the composite picture of God given by the three chapters.

## Methods and Activities

Much of the time will be given to dialogue. One comment or question invariably triggers another. Do not allow the entire session to be used in this activity. After addressing the content of the readings, choose one or more of the following activities to broaden the discussion.

1. Ask persons to read their word pictures describing God (the assignment given at the end of the previous session). Do not ask a participant to read a paper that employs an image of God already used by another person. When several persons have shared their word pictures, engage the group in dialogue about imaginative communication about God. For instance:
  - a. Why is it so necessary to talk about God in parables, metaphors, and vivid imagery?
  - b. The word "gospel," when traced to its Anglo-Saxon root, is "godspell," which means "good story." Martin Luther called the gospel *gute mar*, or "good tale." What do the participants consider to be the most effective single image or story descriptive of God
2. Offer a stimulating comment about the *Father*. Invite the participants to react to that comment. Then do the same with the *Son*, then the *Holy Spirit*. Below are listed some possible statements to which class members may react.
  - a. *God the Father, Creator*  
"What are the signs of His presence? The world about us seems to bear His signature. New universes become commonplace as our telescopes increase in power. They are sextillions of miles away, a sixtrillion being represented by a one and twenty-one zeros. They are so distant that light, traveling at 186,000 miles per second, takes a billion years to reach us. They hold stars, such as Mira, so large that a train starting its journey at the birth of Christ and running around the star at forty-five miles an hour would not yet have completed its journey. We speak of skyscrapers, but by comparison with the sky our tallest buildings do not rise tissue-thickness from the ground. This grandeur of creation is not just power, but miraculously co-ordinated power" (George A. Buttrick, *So We Believe, So We Pray*, [Abingdon, 1951], pp. 31-32).
  - b. *Jesus the Son*  
"Whenever we look at Jesus we can say: 'This is God.' When we see Jesus feeding the

hungry, healing the sick, and comforting the sorrowing, we can say: 'this is God.' When we see Jesus talking to the outcasts and to the sinners and the people with whom no respectable person would have anything to do, we can say: 'This is God!' The whole point of Christianity is not that Jesus is like God but that God is like Jesus" (William Barclay, *Who Is Jesus?* [Tidings, 1975], pp. 23-24).

c. *The Holy Spirit*

"We live in a world that is seeking power —power to cope, power to propel us beyond the level of mere existence, power to overcome life's problems, power to live life at peak, power to rise to the surface, power to teach these whirlwinds we live in how to dance. A nation seeks power to overcome the threat of a democracy gone wrong, scandal, inflation, the drain of war. A community seeks power to overcome the pressures of a mobil society, racial prejudice, drug abuse. An individual seeks power to reshape, to remodel, to re-create. Jesus bequeaths us such power, magnificent power, power to raise the dead, to heal the sick, to overcome and to endure. That power is the Holy Spirit. Over three hundred times in the New Testament the Holy Spirit is associated with power. You and I, therefore, have not scratched the surface with regard to what is available to us through faith in Jesus Christ and the power of his Spirit. Yet, some of us don't believe in that power." (By Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *The Partakers* [Abingdon, 1974], pp. 11-12).

**Concluding the Session**

1. Repeat the comment with which you opened the session: Christian belief basically begins with God. All else follows this. Our quest for clarity about God is a pilgrimage of both faith and intellect and this class is just a brief part of our continuing journey.
2. Give the assignment for the next session.
3. Ask the designated person to lead the group in a concluding prayer.

**Assignment for the Next Session**

1. Read chapter 7 of Colaw's *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian*.
2. Read Genesis 2:4-3:24 and John 3:16-17.
3. Prepare a five-minute message on the topic: "What I'm Discovering About Being Human." Use a *confessional* approach in this message —reflect on your personal experience of strength and weakness as a human being and how the gospel speaks to those strengths and weaknesses.

**Evaluation**

Use again the form suggested at the end of session one.

## **SESSION THREE: PERSPECTIVE ON PEOPLE!**

**Objective**

To help lay speakers increase their understanding of the doctrine of people (traditionally called the doctrine of man) and develop an ability to interpret this understanding effectively.

**Preparation**

Prior to convening the class, ask two persons to be prepared to offer prayer during the session. Ask one to offer an opening prayer, the other a closing prayer.

**How to Get Started**

1. Begin the session by asking the designated person to offer a prayer of invocation.
2. Introduce the session with a brief statement about the nature of people. Example: We know at least four things from the passages we read in preparation for this session:
  - a. God created people.
  - b. He made people in his own image.
  - c. People have both the freedom and capacity for evil as well as good.
  - d. God loves people and wants the very best of life for them.

Our quest for clarity about people begins with ourselves and extends to others. As we better understand people we will be able to communicate with them more effectively.

3. Help persons begin dealing with the positive and negative in human existence by reflecting on their own selves:
  - a. Ask the group members to silently list four personal weaknesses they perceive in their own lives and raise their hands when they have identified the four. Note the amount of time it takes the entire group to finish the task.
  - b. Then ask the group members to silently list four personal strengths they perceive in their own lives and raise their hands when finished. Note the time required for the entire group.
  - c. Discuss the exercise briefly. Did it take members longer to identify strengths than weaknesses? Frequently persons have a sharper awareness of their weaknesses than their strengths. What does an exercise like this help us remember? It reminds us that we are a mixture of both positive and negative characteristics. This is, of course, a biblical viewpoint.

**Methods and Activities**

Encourage group interaction and dialogue. Each of the participants will have written a five-minute message during the previous week. Invite as many persons as possible to share their messages with the

entire group. At the conclusion of each message invite brief comments from the entire group.

Plan to use a minimum of fifteen minutes following the messages by group members to react as a group to some major issues raised by Emerson Colaw in chapter 7 of *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian*. Listed below are some suggested reaction prompts:

- a. "No theme has been more central to United Methodists than the necessity of the 'New Birth.' . . . God's purpose for man has not been fulfilled until he has been born of the Spirit! This assertion moves the new birth out of the area of life's options to the place of focal concern" (pp. 73-74).
- b. "In our generation . . . theologians have rediscovered 'original sin.' They no longer optimistically predict man's inevitable rise to perfection. Man's inhumanity to man has too clearly documented depths of evil and currents of rebellion deep within each of us" (p. 77).
- c. "Some of the most lasting, earth-shaking Christian conversions have taken place quietly, almost imperceptibly and over a long period of time, so that only in retrospect . . . do you realize the extent of the change in your life. How it happens we do not know except to say, God must do it" (p. 82).

#### Concluding the Session

1. Review the basic concepts of the initial presentation. Deal with any questions participants may have.
2. Give the assignments for the next session.
3. Conclude the session by asking the designated person to offer a prayer of gratitude.

#### Assignment for the Next Session

1. Read chapter 6 of Colaw's *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian* and the following scriptures: Ephesians 4:1-16; I Corinthians 12-13.
2. Prepare a very short (300-500 words) message on the topic "What God Expects of the Church."

#### Evaluation

Use the form suggested at the end of session one.

## SESSION FOUR: SPIRIT-FILLED COMMUNITY!

#### Objective

To help lay speakers increase their understanding of the meaning of the church and be able to communicate this understanding more effectively.

#### Preparation

Prior to convening the class, ask two persons to be prepared to offer prayers during the session. Ask one to offer an opening prayer, the other a closing prayer.

#### How to Get Started

1. Begin the session by asking the designated person to offer a prayer of invocation.

2. Introduce the session with a statement about the meaning of the church. Example: Archbishop William Temple has said that the church is the only society in the world that exists for the benefit of those who are not members. Paul reminds us (II Corinthians 5:18) that God has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has enlisted us in this ministry of reconciliation. We are the Body of Christ to do his work in the world. We are equipped by the Holy Spirit for the work we are called to do.

3. Begin the work of the session by dealing directly with the content of the reading assignment. You may approach this in many ways. Here are two possibilities:

- a. Ask participants if they have any reaction to the content of the reading assignment. Record the comments and questions on newsprint or chalkboard. This will enable you to be certain they are addressed during the session. Proceed then to engage the group in dialogue regarding the questions and comments.
- b. Ask students to form groups of no more than four persons each and make two lists. List one is "What a Spirit-filled Community Is." List two is "What a Spirit-filled Community Is Not." Ask each group to choose a reporter to bring the group's findings to the larger group. Allow ten minutes for small group discussion. Then collect the group lists on newsprint or a chalkboard.

#### Methods and Activities

1. Move into the heart of the discussion by asking participants to react to Emerson Colaw's comment: "We are committed to the idea that even in the midst of a revolutionary time in church history, one that may alter radically the present structuring of congregational life, the established community of believers is still an instrument through which the Holy Spirit may work and few of us are willing to rush out and commit institutional suicide" (p. 62). Questions to prompt reaction:
  - a. Can anything be accomplished for good without at least a minimal amount of institutional structure? Why or why not?
  - b. What difference does the Holy Spirit make in an institution's life and work?
2. Ask participants to assume roles of the following persons in our society. They may take their choice:
  - a. A wealthy business executive who has never known significant personal need or failure.
  - b. A teen-ager who has dropped out of school and is presently unemployed, bored, and experimenting with drugs and alcohol.
  - c. A retired person who lives alone and is without

significant human contacts and personal friendships.

- d. A young adult just embarking on a career who is at the same time beginning a family of his or her own.
- e. A middle adult whose marriage has just collapsed and ended in divorce.
- f. A middle adult whose personal, family, and professional life is rather successful but who feels a lack of joy and excitement in living.

As each person assumes one of these roles, engage the entire group in a discussion of the questions:

- a. Why should I be a part of the church?
- b. What can the church offer me?
- c. What can I offer the church?

- 3. Use at least twenty minutes of the session to hear some of the class members present their messages on "What God Expects of the Church." Invite persons who have not done so in any of the earlier sessions to present their messages first.

#### Concluding the Session

- 1. Review the basic concepts of the session. Deal with any questions students may have.
- 2. Give the assignments for the next session.
- 3. Conclude the session with the designated person offering a prayer of gratitude.

#### Assignment for the Next Session

- 1. Read chapter 10 of Colaw's *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian* and the New Testament Letter of James.
- 2. Prepare a very short (300-500 words) message about "How I Am Seeking to be a Prophetic Person of Faith." Each student will need to read Colaw's chapter 10 before beginning the message.

#### Evaluation

Use the form suggested at the end of session one.

## SESSION FIVE: CHRISTIANS ARE MINISTERS!

#### Objective

To help lay speakers increase their understanding of the concept that all Christians, not only the ordained clergy, are ministers and to help them communicate this concept to others.

#### Preparation

Prior to convening the class, ask two persons to be prepared to offer prayers during the session. Ask one to offer an opening prayer, the other a closing prayer.

#### How to Get Started

- 1. Begin the session by asking the designated person to offer a prayer of invocation.
- 2. Introduce the session with a statement about the necessity of all persons thinking of themselves as ministers and engaging themselves in ministry. Example: All Christians are called to be in ministry to others. Christian faith is not only something we have, it is also something we do. We are instruments by which God works redemptive-

ly in the world. Someone has said: "If God wants to, he has the power to make a violin. But if he wants to make a Stradivarius violin, he has to have a Stradivarius." What is the point of such a comment as this?

- 3. Present chapter 1 of part 4 of *The Book of Discipline*, "The Ministry of All Christians."

#### Methods and Activities

- 1. Ask the participants to react to the content of the reading assignment:
  - a. What were the most important points made by James on "practical religion"?
  - b. Colaw describes Jesus as having the "posture of availability." What would a posture of availability mean in the life and work of a contemporary follower of Christ?
- 2. Each participant has prepared a brief message entitled "How I Am Seeking to Be a Prophetic Person of Faith." Invite each participant to share this message with the entire group. Begin with any persons who have not yet made a formal presentation of a message to the group. Allow a brief reaction and response time following each presentation.
- 3. If time permits, ask group members to identify a person whom they know personally who exemplifies ministry though he or she is not an ordained clergy person. Invite participants to briefly describe the person and his or her specific expression of ministry.

#### Concluding the Session

- 1. Review the basic concepts of the initial presentation. Deal with any questions students may have.
- 2. Because some chapters of Colaw's *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian* could not be covered in the course, ask if there are any other issues prompted by the book that should be discussed. If so, deal with them as effectively as possible in the time available.
- 3. Invite persons to evaluate the course with the following simple questions. (You may want to prepare this evaluation sheet in advance of the session. Persons need not sign their evaluation forms.)

#### PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION

- a. How do you feel about the quality of the total experience?  
Negative      Positive      Very Good
- b. How do you rate your own contribution?  
Disappointing      Competent      Excellent
- c. How do you rate the level of *new* learnings?  
Insignificant      Significant      Very Significant
- d. How do you rate the resources used?  
Poor      Good      Very Good
- e. How do you rate the leadership of the course?  
Poor      Good      Very Good

f. What suggestions do you have for future courses on this topic?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Conclude the session with a prayer of gratitude.

#### After the Course Has Ended

1. Use the participants' evaluation forms to make your own assessment of the quality of the course.
2. Record in a brief article for future reference your own learnings and lasting impressions of the course.

#### Additional Resources

Speer, Lon A. *God's Action: Our Affirmation*. Graded Press, 1975.

A study of the historic Christian creeds, our United Methodist tradition in theology, and help in developing contemporary affirmation

Hares, James. *Essential United Methodist Beliefs*. Discipleship Resources, 1976.

A summary statement in a brief booklet.

Arnold, Joan; James, Ralph; and Stanger, Frank. *Journeys into Faith*. Graded Press, 1976.

An adult study unit designed to help persons recognize the wide variety of theological positions within United Methodism and to learn some of the skills basic to developing their own theological positions.

Our Living Faith Series. Graded Press, 1977-.

A series of eight adult study units on basic doctrines of the Christian faith. Published quarterly beginning with fall 1977, one unit each quarter. See *Adult Planbook* for titles.

Outler, Albert C. *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*. Discipleship Resources, 1975.

Wesley, John. *The Character of a Methodist*. Discipleship Resources.

A reprint of a popular tract by John Wesley.

## OUR UNITED METHODIST HERITAGE AND TRADITIONS

Donald B. Ruthenberg

#### OBJECTIVES FOR THE COURSE

1. To help lay speakers gain an understanding of the distinctive traditions and emphases of The United Methodist Church.
2. To assist lay speakers to personally become informed about the history and heritage of the people historically known as Methodists and United Brethren from the time of Otterbein, Boehm, Wesley, and others to the present.
3. To help lay speakers develop skills in interpreting the United Methodist heritage and traditions to others.

#### OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

This guide is specifically intended to suggest ways of organizing the study of our United Methodist heritage and traditions using the basic text, *United Methodist Primer* by James Armstrong.

These guidelines are not to be used as a substitute for your own preparation and effort. The intent is to give some specific hints that may be helpful to stimulate your creativity. The format is based on a fairly traditional concept of group discussion directed by one leader.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR PLANNING

1. Read and collect as many of the resource materials as possible. Always attempt to make a clear outline of the material you want to put across.
2. Write out learning goals for each session. Attempt to evaluate the process as you go along to see that you are on target.

3. Always try to make physical surroundings attractive and as conducive to good learning as possible.
4. Be alert to the members of your group and their depth of understanding and interest.
5. Evaluate participation and activity. Ask questions, such as "How can I sharpen the focus of study skills to meet course objectives?"

#### BASIC RESOURCES

##### For leaders

Hill, Dorothy. *Leading a Group*. Board of Education, The Methodist Church, 1966 (available from Discipleship Resources).

Warren, Virginia B., ed. *How Adults Can Learn More, Faster*. Washington, D.C.: The National Association for Continuing Adult Education, 1961.

##### For participants

Armstrong, James. *United Methodist Primer*. Discipleship Resources, 1976.

## SESSION ONE: People Called United Methodists

**Introduction:** This chapter emphasizes that the United Methodists are the most inclusive religious group in America today. For this reason, "a glad acceptance of pluralism and a commitment to openness and dialogue are essential if the church is to be the church in today's world."

#### Objectives

1. Each participant should be led to express and

clarify his or her personal understanding of our diversity as a church body.

2. Each participant should gain some insight and an ability to share and discuss two or three conclusions about our church in relation to sociological and psychological understandings of its unique nature.

#### Preparation

##### A. Major concerns of this session

1. United Methodists do not represent a regional or ethnic flavor. We are a conglomerate, or cross section, of American life.
2. There is no such thing as a United Methodist point of view.
3. There have been political, social, and theological differences among United Methodists. In this chapter, Bishop Armstrong cites the unique character of the people called United Methodist in contrast to other groups. He acknowledges our diversity and suggests that pluralistic diversity, which has allowed wide gaps and divisions, has made us great. While accepting one another, we can lovingly disagree. He would "rejoice in our differences, all the while professing and demonstrating our oneness in Christ."

##### B. Methods and activities

1. This first session will be very crucial to this study. Some persons will arrive unprepared to discuss the book or unwilling to accept the concept of pluralism that is presented. Allow some time for getting acquainted. Find out where the people are from geographically and what they think about our church. Informal conversation in which persons share responses to questions such as the following would be a good way to begin.
  - a. How long a United Methodist?
  - b. Occupational background?
  - c. Social and ethnic background?
  - d. Educational background?

Obviously the leader does not want to phrase these queries to embarrass anyone. The object is to demonstrate diversity. I do *not* advocate small conversation groups at this time. If group members are to interact in this study, we must find out how diverse they are right now, and it will be more evident if they all listen to one another.

2. Illustrate our diversity by calling attention to widely known but divergent political or social leaders who represent themselves as United Methodist, such as George McGovern, George Wallace, and Shirley Chisholm.
3. Post some objectives for the course on chalkboard or newsprint. Help participants express their personal objectives for the study. Evaluate, modify, and revise.

4. Introduce four major ideas from chapter 1 and lead a general discussion on these themes. These questions may help you:
  - a. What is the meaning of Luke 9:23?
  - b. Is there a communications gap in our church? What tensions confront us?
  - c. In what ways were the disciples of Christ alike? Different?
5. Make an assignment to read chapter 2 plus any additional materials desired for the second session.

#### Additional resources

Arnold, Joan; James, Ralph; Stanger, Frank. *Journeys into Faith*. Graded Press, 1976.

Campbell, Jerry D. *How Does Your Soul Prosper?* Play and booklet. Commission on Archives and History.

Ryan, Roy H. *Possessing Our Heritage*. Discipleship Resources, 1976.

*Services and Resources for Worship on Historic Occasions*. Commission on Archives and History, 1975.

## SESSION TWO: The Rocks from Which We Have Been Hewn

Introduction: Bishop Armstrong asks us to trace our heritage back beyond the Wesleys or Otterbein or Asbury or Albright. His thesis is that our roots are to be found in the the Holy Catholic Church and even in the Old Testament Israelite Church.

#### Objectives

1. Each participant will come to understand the biblical roots and foundations that led to our present church structure.
2. Each participant should come to a new appreciation of our debt to historical personages and religious movements.
3. Each participant should be able to cite new facts to support the evangelical nature of our church drawing historically upon the revivalist and reform movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
4. Each participant should be able to cite the historical American groups that fragmented, developed, and finally united in mission and governance to become The United Methodist Church.

#### Preparation

##### A. Major concerns of this session

1. The strong contribution of our church to social order.
2. The frontier nature of our country and the manner in which our churches developed.
3. The historical identities and branches of the denominations that paralleled, splintered, and regrouped to become The United Methodist

Church and the identities of the men and women who have been responsible for these developments.

4. None of the persons named by the author expected to build a new church of personal followers. Ours was a church tradition built on faith in Jesus Christ and with the free grace and redemption of his spirit.

**B. Methods and activities**

1. Prepare a chart of the historical lineage of our institutional development. Have available names of leaders of each early church group. (See chart on page 27 of *United Methodist Primer*.) Make sure illustrations and examples fit the overall goals for this session.
2. Show the film *Burning Bright* or the two filmstrips, *Our United Methodist Heritage*. Discuss in relation to chapter 2 of the text.
3. Ask each participant to find out significant information about one of the classic historical figures of The United Methodist Church to share at the next session. Make assignments on the basis of personal interest, but each participant should have a different person. Ask each member to read chapter 3 of the text.

**C. Additional resources**

**1. Books**

Bailey, Wilfred. *The People Called United Methodist*. Rev. ed. Graded Press, 1975. Leader's guide available.

Bucke, Emory, ed. *The History of American Methodism*. 3 vols. Abingdon, 1964.

Eller, Paul Himmel. *These Evangelical United Brethren*. Otterbein Press, 1957.

Garrison, Webb, and Luccock, Halford E. *Endless Line of Splendor*. United Methodist Communications, 1975. (Order from publisher, 1200 Davis Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201.)

Garrison, Webb R., and Bergland, John K. *Strangely Warm: The Story of United Methodism*. Graded Press, 1971. Course design guide by Dorothea K. Wolcott.

Harmon, Nolan B., ed. *Encyclopedia of World Methodism*. 2 vols. Abingdon, 1975.

—. *Understanding The United Methodist Church*. Rev. ed. Abingdon, 1977.

Hildebrandt, Franz. *Christianity According to the Wesleys*. Epworth Press, 1956.

Luccock, Halford E.; Hutchinson, Paul; and Goodloe, Robert W. *The Story of Methodism*. Abingdon, 1949.

Norwood, Frederic A. *The Story of American Methodism*. Abingdon, 1974.

Outler, Albert C., ed. *John Wesley, 1703-1791. A Library of Christian Thought*. Oxford University Press, 1964.

Short, Roy L. *United Methodism in Theory and Practice*. Abingdon, 1974.

Tuell, Jack M. *The Organization of The United Methodist Church*. Rev. ed. Abingdon, 1977.

2. Films, filmstrips, and records

*Album of United Methodist History*. 33 1/3 rpm record. Script by Lorenz Boyd. Introduction by Gerald Kennedy. Abingdon, 1969.

*Burning Bright*. 16mm film, color, 32 minutes.

Rental: United Methodist Film Service.

*John Wesley*. 16mm film, black and white or color, 77 minutes. Rental: United Methodist Film Service.

*Our United Methodist Heritage*. sfs, 35 minutes. Purchase from United Methodist Film Service.

*Wesley and His Times*. 16mm film, color, 14 1/2 minutes. Rental: United Methodist Film Service.

## SESSION THREE: A Life-Centered Faith

**Introduction:** Bishop Armstrong gives us an outstanding lead on the material with the title of this chapter. It has been said that "we stand for nothing and sit for everything." Our church has not been a theologically sophisticated church. It has been a church concerned with the lives persons lead—not the souls they lost.

**Objectives**

1. To help participants understand what a confessional church is and why we are not one.
2. To acquaint participants with the Doctrinal Statement and our Social Principles.
3. To allow the participants to internalize and understand the distinctive emphases of our church's doctrines and mission.

**Preparation**

**A. Major concerns of this session**

1. The major idea in this session is the statement of the Theological Study Commission adopted by the 1972 General Conference: "No single creed or doctrine summary can adequately serve the needs and intentions of United Methodists in confessing their faith or in celebrating Christian experience. We accept the historical creeds and confessions as cherished Landmarks of Christian self-consciousness and affirmation even as we favor serious and informal theological experimentation."
2. There can be a statement of shared faith even though we do not express it in a creed. We share in the Trinity with specific insights into the creative nature of a personal God, the servanthood of Christ, and the awareness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
3. A strong concern exists to demonstrate that the

distinctive emphasis of our church meet the needs of different life-styles and the necessity of cooperative good works.

4. Our concerns for social principles, welfare, and peace activities are demonstrated in our Social Creed.
- B. Methods and activities.
  1. By this session certain issues have emerged with participants that reinforce the stated diversity and value of our church. You must take care at this point not to let your positions on polity and faith or your emotions interfere with your leadership. Make sure you evaluate any information you share and validate its presentation. As United Methodists we do not hold to rigid, hard lines of doctrines or approaches to belief. For example, everyone agrees the Holy Spirit exists; however, we surely do not agree how the Spirit works.
  2. Divide the social creed into two parts: The basic statement of affirmation and the implications for a personal witness. Ask each participant to express views contrary to each statement. How does it affect that person's life? Ask each person to describe the church's need to be responsible as a redemptive fellowship in working with the following concerns: drugs, racism, collective bargaining, ecology, homosexuality, war and peace.
  3. Make assignments to read source material, including the creeds in our hymnal, for next session.

C. Additional resources

*Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements: Part II, "The Book of Discipline"* 1972. Reprinted by Graded Press, 1972 (available from Cokesbury).

"Evangelism and Social Action: Either/Or?" *engage/social action*, November, 1974 (available from Service Department, Board of Church and Society).

*United Methodist Church and Peace*. Available from Service Department, Board of Church and Society.

*Guidelines for Christian Social Concerns*. Resource System for Local Church Council on Ministries. United Methodist Publishing House, 1977 (available from Cokesbury).

*Local Church Social Action: How and Why*. Available from Service Department, Board of Church and Society.

*Persons in Mission and Salvation Today*. New World Sound Cassette Series (available from Service Center, Board of Global Ministries).

*Statement of Social Principles*. Filmstrip and leaflets. Available from Service Department, Board of Church and Society.

Outler, Albert C. *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*. Discipleship Resources, 1975.

## SESSION FOUR: The Body: Bones, Flesh, and Spirit

### Objectives

1. Each participant should be able to explain the structure and function of The United Methodist Church organization.
2. To acquaint the group with the concept that church organization facilitates the work of the Holy Spirit when it works to meet the needs of the local congregation.
3. To encourage participants to understand that each member in the church is called to ministry and that the organization is as strong as the individual's willingness to be in ministry.

### Preparation

A. Major concerns of this session

1. Participants are asked to understand that structure and function are separate.
2. There is a need to recognize that there are many forms of legitimate ministry.
3. The local church is the basic Christian community.
4. There must be a commitment of all members to make overall structure work.
5. Each institutional structure contains within itself the seeds for its own renewal or destruction.
6. The purpose of structure is to make life possible.

B. Methods and activities

1. The leader must avoid the temptation to allow this session to become a recital of clichés about the "Methodist Statistical Church" or a chart-like description of the various boards and agencies. To be sure, the structures must be understood to know the body of our church. Nevertheless, Armstrong's strong contribution is reinforcing the witness that "a skeleton can hold a body together—it cannot breathe life into it!"
2. Spend three minutes learning the song "I am the Church, You are the Church, We are the Church Together."
3. Open discussion with a statement on each of the following:
  - a. What is the meaning of a called ministry?
  - b. The mission of the Holy Spirit belongs to each of us.
  - c. Leadership in our church should be from General Conference.
  - d. The lay leader of a local church is as important as the pastor.
  - e. Every church should make its own membership requirements.
  - f. The genius of United Methodism is its connectionalism.

4. Now introduce a rather specific chart of our organizational structure. Explain the functions and meeting schedules of General Conference, Jurisdictional Conferences, Annual Conferences, and so forth. Be prepared to furnish specific information relating this topic to your jurisdiction and conference.
5. Explain how your Annual Conference responds to the local church through conference council, commissions, and boards.

C. Additional Resources

*The Structure of The United Methodist Church.* United Methodist Communications, 1976.

*Beginning Now.* 16mm color film, 8 minutes. Rental and sale from Mass Media Ministries.

Carr, John and Adrienne. *An Experiment in Practical Christianity.* Discipleship Resources, 1975.

Schaller, Lyle. *Hey, That's Our Church!* Abingdon, 1975.

## SESSION FIVE: Losing Life—And Finding It

Introduction: Bishop Armstrong issues a strong call to be in mission—witnessing, teaching, preaching—but more than this he outlines how The United Methodist Church has been serving others rather than being self-centered in its responsibility to be where it is needed.

### Objectives

1. That participants will come to see The United Methodist Church as an agent of change.
2. That each group member will be able to express and understand the missionary and ecumenical nature of our church, both organizationally and as an intentional called ministry.
3. That each participant will grasp a historical perspective from biblical insights into the responsibility to witness and proclaim Christ's gospel.
4. That each participant will understand the need to evangelize in today's world.

### Preparation

#### A. Major concerns of this session

1. We were founded as a church in mission by Christ.
2. What is true about the zeal of American Methodism is true of our world mission commitments.
3. Not only do we preach the Word, we witness through agricultural ministries, the establishment of hospitals and homes, and some of the foremost educational institutions in the world.
4. Ecumenical programs and activities are necessary to bring about a more effective ministry for Christ in his church.

#### B. Methods and activities

1. Prepare a talk supporting an ecumenical emphasis. Specific questions to raise include the following:
  - a. Are there new forms of mission and cooperation available?
  - b. Why not let government agencies take over these programs?
  - c. What does our UMCOR do?
  - d. How do political considerations change our missionary zeal?
2. Guide the class in a discussion of the textbook and your presentation.
3. Have a panel of persons with service to missionaries speak to the group.
4. Use some of the audio-visual resources for a springboard to discussion.

C. Additional Resources

Freudenberger, Dean, and Minus, Paul. *Christian Responsibility in a Hungry World.* Abingdon, 1976.

*The Interpreter*, November-December, 1975 (available from United Methodist Communications).

*The People Called Methodist.* 16mm film, color, 28 minutes. Written and directed by Donald E. Hughes. United Methodist Communications, 1975 (available from United Methodist Film Service).

"Why Global"—Emphasis for Local Churches. Brochure, *Ideas and Suggestions for Planning a Why Global Emphasis*, Filmstrip, *Mission: A Christian Presence*, Animated film, *Go Global* (available from Service Center, Board of Global Ministries).

### Ordering Addresses for Resources

Black College Fund, Box 871, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.

Cokesbury (order from your Regional Service Center).

Commission on Archives and History, Box 488, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina 28745.

Discipleship Resources, P. O. Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.

General Commission on Religion and Race, 100 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

IMPACT, 100 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Mass Media Ministries, 2116 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218.

Service Center, Board of Global Ministries, 7820 Reading Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45237.

Service Department, Board of Church and Society, 100 Maryland Avenue, N.E. Washington, D.C. 20002.

United Methodist Film Service, 1525 McGavock Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.

United Methodist Communications, 1200 Davis Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201.

# INTRODUCTION TO LAY SPEAKING

## LEADER'S GUIDE



## ABOUT THIS BOOK

*Introduction to Lay Speaking: Leader's Guide* is a basic resource for leaders of basic or introductory training courses for lay speakers and prospective lay speakers. A companion book, *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*, is a basic resource for reading and study by lay speakers and prospective lay speakers. It is the suggested participant's study book for this course. These resources have been planned by a team composed of Joseph H. Kite, Jr., Richard W. Harrington, Harry W. Robie, and Richard S. Smith.

Resources for the lay speaking program are prepared and edited by the Division of Lay Life and Work, Board of Discipleship, published by The United Methodist Publishing House, and distributed by Cokesbury. See the back pages of this book for a complete listing of basic resources.

*Introduction to Lay Speaking: Leader's Guide* has been written by Richard S. Smith, a member of the staff of the Division of Lay Life and Work, Board of Discipleship. Mr. Smith has also been responsible for the planning and editing of the complete series of lay speaker resources released in 1977.

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# CONTENTS

|                                                                   |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....                                                | 3  |
| Objectives for This Course .....                                  | 3  |
| Lay Speaking in the 1976 <i>Book of Discipline</i> .....          | 3  |
| Background Statement on Lay Speaking .....                        | 4  |
| Planning for This Course .....                                    | 5  |
| Building the Leadership Plan .....                                | 6  |
| Suggested Objectives, Methods and Activities, and Resources ..... | 10 |
| A Sample Topical Outline for an Introductory Course .....         | 17 |
| Resources .....                                                   | 17 |

## INTRODUCTION

This course has been prepared as a basic or first course for lay speakers. It is intended for persons seeking certification as lay speakers in The United Methodist Church. It will also be helpful to persons who, though not seeking certification, are desirous of

improving their understanding of the Christian faith and their ability to share that faith in spoken communications. Persons who have completed this course should be given the opportunity of participating in one of the advanced courses for lay speakers.

## OBJECTIVES FOR THIS COURSE

1. To help participants develop an understanding of the roles, relationships, service opportunities, and procedures for certification and renewal of certification as lay speakers.
2. To help participants develop their communication skills through an increased understanding of the principles of communication and practice in the application of these principles in activities related to the responsibilities of a lay speaker.
3. To help participants clarify and develop their understandings of the Christian faith, the Bible, worship, and the heritage and life of The United Methodist Church.
4. To help participants develop skill in utilizing the resources of their Christian faith, the Bible, worship, and the heritage and life of The United Methodist Church in the performance of their activities as lay speakers.

## LAY SPEAKING IN THE 1976 *BOOK OF DISCIPLINE*

### Section IX. Lay Speaking.

#### ¶ 270.

1. A *lay speaker* is a member of a local church who is well informed on the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church and who has received specific training to develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication.
2. Lay speakers are to serve the church, in any way in which the witness of the spoken word inspires the laity to deeper commitment to Christ and more effective churchmanship, including the interpretation or explanation of the Scriptures, doctrine, organization, and life of the Church.
3. Through continued study and training, a lay speaker should prepare to undertake one or more of the following functions, giving primary attention to service within the local church.
  - a) To take initiative in giving assistance and support to the program emphases of the Church and to assist in giving vital leadership to the total work of the Church.

- b) To assist in the conduct of worship services and to lead meetings for prayer, study, and discussion when requested by the pastor.
- c) To conduct services of worship, present sermons and addresses, and lead meetings for study and training in settings other than those in the local church in which the lay speaker holds membership, when recommended or requested by a pastor or district superintendent.

#### ¶ 271. Certification of Lay Speakers.

1. A candidate may be certified as a lay speaker by the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking (or other responsible group as the district or conference may determine) after the candidate has:
  - a. Completed a training course for lay speakers, which may be one recommended by the Board of Discipleship or an alternate approved by the appropriate committee.
  - b. Made application in writing to the appropriate committee and has been recommended by the pastor and the Administrative Board or the Charge

Conference of the local church in which he or she holds membership.

- c. Appeared before the appropriate committee for a review of his or her application and a consideration of responsibilities of a lay speaker.
2. It is recommended that a consecration service be held in the district for persons certified as lay speakers.

**¶272. Renewal of Certification of Lay Speakers.**

1. The certification of a lay speaker may be renewed annually by the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking (or other responsible group as the district or

conference may determine), after the lay speaker has:

- a. Requested in writing the renewal of certification.
- b. Submitted an annual report to his or her Charge Conference and the appropriate committee, giving evidence of the satisfactory performance of activities related to the office of lay speaker.
- c. Been recommended by the pastor and the Administrative Board or Charge Conference.
- d. Completed at least once in every three years an advanced course for lay speakers, which may be one recommended by the Board of Discipleship or an alternate approved by the appropriate committee.

## BACKGROUND STATEMENT ON LAY SPEAKING

Lay speaking has a long history in The United Methodist Church and its predecessor denominations. One root of the current office of lay speaker can be found in the beginnings of Methodism and the acceptance by John Wesley of lay persons as preachers for his new societies. Another root can be found in the development of the office of lay exhorter in American Methodism. Still another root relates the office to the development in the 1920s and 1930s of programs of lay activities and conference and general boards of lay activities in the former Methodist churches.

In more recent times, the lay speaker program has had a renewal in many annual conferences under the theme "No Silent Pulpits." To make it possible for every congregation that desires it to have a worship service every week, lay speakers have offered their services to congregations on circuits and with part-time pastors, conducting services on specific Sundays of each month.

From a beginning emphasis upon pulpit supply and preaching, the lay speaker program has broadened its areas of service in recent years to include a wide range of activities in the life of the church—but always with an emphasis upon those activities that call for skill in the use of the spoken word to proclaim the gospel. So lay speakers may be found conducting services in nursing homes, at campgrounds, and wherever Christians assemble for worship; they may be invited to speak at meetings of community organizations, to meetings of United Methodist Women or United Methodist Men, or at retreats and other assemblies of lay persons; they may be teachers of church school classes, lay liturgists, prayer or study group leaders, or they may fill any one of many other leadership positions in the life of their local churches. Wherever they serve, lay speakers do so because the area is one in which the witness of the spoken word serves to inspire

persons to Christian commitment and Christian service.

The current statement about lay speaking is a revision by the 1976 General Conference of a statement that has been evolving over many years. Based on this statement, there are several emphases that can appropriately be included in training programs. These include:

1) Lay speakers are *members of local churches* who are *well informed* on the Scriptures, the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church.

2) Lay speakers are persons with *abilities in spoken communications* who, by entering upon the office of lay speaker, *commit themselves to the improvement of their skills* in communicating through the spoken word.

3) Service opportunities for lay speakers are to be found *within and beyond* the local church in which they hold membership. In either case, appropriate service opportunities for lay speakers are those tasks and positions that call for persons with skill in the communication of the gospel through the spoken word.

4) Lay speakers *serve with the guidance* and, beyond the local church, *at the request of the pastor and/or the district superintendent*. They are *certified by a district or conference committee*, upon the recommendation of their pastor and their Administrative Board or Charge Conference and upon the completion of an appropriate training program.

5) Lay speakers *are not local pastors*. Persons desiring to enter upon the pastoral ministry, either full time or part time, are to be advised to consult with their pastor, district superintendent, and/or district Committee on the Ordained Ministry, to obtain information on the steps into the pastoral ministry.

# PLANNING FOR THIS COURSE

## WHO PLANS?

Basic responsibility for providing training opportunities for prospective lay speakers and advanced courses for certified lay speakers resides with the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking. Development and coordination of the district or conference program is in most situations a responsibility of a Council on Ministries. The organizational structure for lay speaking will vary from conference to conference, but through a district or conference director of lay speaking, or some other designated person or group, the lay speaking program and the Committee on Lay Speaking will be represented on the district or conference Council on Ministries.

The Committee on Lay Speaking will develop a plan for the training of lay speakers, indicating the number, audience, purpose, time, and place of the various courses proposed, and report its proposal to the district or conference Council on Ministries for coordination with the program proposals of the various other committees, councils, organizations, and leaders of the district or conference. Once the training plan has been approved, the Committee on Lay Speaking will be responsible for implementing the specific courses for lay speakers.

At this point, the Committee on Lay Speaking may choose to appoint a planning team for each of the courses or for groups of courses, such as basic and advanced. The final plan must provide for publicity, recruitment of participants, budget, resources, leadership, design, and evaluation of the program.

It is strongly urged that this basic course be led by a leadership team of two or three persons selected for their experience and knowledge in the several areas to be considered in the course and for their skill in leading groups of adults in learning activities. The team should plan as a whole and share leadership in the sessions as appropriate.

## APPROACHES TO THE MEETING SCHEDULE

One of the basic decisions that must be made very early is the meeting schedule for the course. It is suggested that ten to twelve hours of group time be provided for this course, though you may obviously plan a schedule that provides for more or less time. Some of the options that you may consider as you plan the meeting schedule include:

1. Meeting one night a week for two hours each night for a period of five or six weeks.

2. Meeting five nights in succession in one week, two hours each night, with the possibility of two sessions on Sunday by beginning on Sunday afternoon.

3. Meeting for three times in sessions of three hours each, the meetings being held on Saturdays or

Sundays, either on consecutive weeks or with several weeks intervening between sessions.

4. Meeting in a weekend retreat, beginning on Friday evening and concluding on Sunday afternoon.

Before making the decision about your meeting schedule, you may find it helpful to list the strengths and weaknesses of each of the options that you are considering. For example, let us look at two possibilities:

Meeting one night a week for two hours each night for a period of five or six weeks:

### Strengths

Allows for preparation time between sessions.

Provides opportunity for repeated skill practice and development.

Allows for the division of the course into manageable units.

### Weaknesses

Many persons find it difficult to commit five or six night in a series.

Absences will tend to break the continuity and effectiveness of the course.

The time between sessions will cause the group to spend additional time each week getting started.

### Meeting in a weekend retreat:

Concentrated time allows for intensive involvement of and interaction among participants and leaders.

Holding sessions away from the home community helps to insure lack of interruption by home and community responsibilities.

There is a lack of time for participant preparation between sessions.

There is a lack of time for reading and study and for skill practice.

Persons are excluded who cannot be away from home or who work for a full weekend.

## LEADERSHIP OF THE COURSE

It is suggested that the leadership for the course be a team of two or three persons. The role of the leadership team is to plan and provide leadership in the sessions of the course. The team may include both clergy and lay persons. Persons with skill in teaching and leading groups of adults in learning activities and with expertise in the areas to be considered in the course will be needed. Frequently the district director of lay speaking will be the coordinator or leader of the team.

Where can you find members of the leadership team? Persons with the needed skills, experience, and expertise can be found in every district. Some will be pastors in the district, others will be lay speakers with

wide experience and effective service in the program, still others will be teachers of speech, Bible, religion, and related subjects in the high schools and colleges in the area, while still others will be found among the persons serving as teachers in the adult church school programs of the churches of the district.

One of the first tasks of the leadership team will be to identify the resources and skills present in the members of the team, the resources and skills to be found among the participants in the course, and the need for additional resource persons. If the leadership team has been carefully chosen, the need for additional resource persons will be at a minimum.

If resource persons who are neither members of the leadership team nor participants in the course are to be involved in any of the sessions, careful preparation must be made for their participation. This will include the preparation of a clear statement of the goals and expectations for their participation and careful planning with them of the ways in which they will contribute to the course.

Avoid the practice of asking a resource person to

"lead a session on worship" without further guidance or direction. If a resource person is to be invited in the area of worship, that person needs careful orientation to the purpose of the sessions on worship, what has gone before in the course, what will follow, and the expectations that you have as a leadership team and class for their participation. Are they to provide a lecture, lead a discussion, guide some group activities, make assignments for completion outside class time, deal with a specific aspect of the topic, provide a broad introduction to the topic, or make some other contribution? Resource persons can make a significant contribution only if their participation is an integral part of the overall plan for the course.

It is suggested that each member of the leadership team obtain and study a copy of the book *Leading a Group* by Dorothy Lacroix Hill (see resource list) prior to the first meeting of the team for specific planning of the course. This book provides excellent guidance for the development of a leadership plan and is more complete than space permits us to be in this leader's guide.

## BUILDING THE LEADERSHIP PLAN

### STEPS IN PLANNING

1. Read the participant's book and the entire leader's guide prior to the first meeting of the leadership team.

2. Prepare objectives for the course.

3. Determine the number of sessions for the course, and prepare learning objectives for each of the sessions. Plan for ways of involving the participants in the final determination of the objectives.

4. Develop a listing of alternate methods and activities in relation to your objectives for each session; select those that you would prefer to use; plan for the involvement of the participants in the final selection of the methods and activities.

5. Build an outline for each of the sessions, showing objectives, methods and activities, flow of the session, procedures to be used, leadership responsibility, room arrangement, resources needed, evaluation procedures, and plans for the opening and closing of the session.

6. Plan for the evaluation of the course as a whole.

7. Develop a list of resources that you will have available throughout the course, such as materials for a browsing table, as well as a list of resources that you will need for the sessions including newsprint, tape recorders, writing paper, participants' books, and other materials. Assign responsibility for the provision of the resources.

8. Review and state clearly the responsibilities of each member of the leadership team.

9. Schedule meetings of your leadership team to review the plans and evaluate progress between each of the sessions of the course.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Basic to the preparation of a leadership plan is the development of learning objectives for the course as a whole and the selection of objectives, methods, and activities for the several sessions of the course. Learning objectives become the criteria by which content is outlined, methods and activities are chosen, and resources are selected. Learning objectives should identify the content area with which you will be working and the type of learning activity in which participants will be engaged. A helpful discussion of learning objectives will be found in chapter 7, "Engaging Learner and Content," of *Leading a Group* by Hill. The following chart, adapted from pages 284-87 of *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* by Malcom Knowles (see the resource list) may be helpful to you in the development of your objectives.

Methods and activities are the specific ways in which participants will be helped to achieve the learning objectives. It is our suggestion that your leadership team develop objectives for the course and then decide on the specific objectives for the individual sessions, selecting methods and activities in relation to these objectives. Two examples of learning objectives and related methods and activities follow. Note that it is possible to develop several activities in relation to a single objective.

# WORKSHEET FOR STATING LEARNING OBJECTIVES

| Type of Learning Activity          | Content Areas                          |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| To develop <i>knowledge</i> about  | 1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6.<br>7. |
| To develop <i>understanding</i> of | 1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6.<br>7. |
| To develop <i>skill</i> in         | 1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6.<br>7. |
| To develop <i>attitudes</i> toward | 1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6.<br>7. |
| To develop <i>interest</i> in      | 1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6.<br>7. |
| To develop <i>values</i> of        | 1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6.<br>7. |

### **Example One**

**Objective:** To help participants develop an understanding of worship in the United Methodist tradition.

**An activity:** In the session participants will listen to a fifteen-minute presentation by one of the leaders on the theology of worship in The United Methodist Church and will then participate in a twenty-minute discussion in small groups using a guide prepared by the leadership team.

**Another activity:** Three participants will be asked to read the book *Worship in the Methodist Tradition* and prepare a twenty-minute panel presentation for the class.

### **Example Two**

**Objective:** To help participants develop skill in writing and delivering short speeches.

**An Activity:** After a presentation of the steps in the preparation of a speech and some guidelines for the delivery of speeches, participants will be asked to prepare a five-minute speech on an assigned topic to be given before the class and evaluated by their peers using a guide prepared by the leadership team.

The careful preparation of learning objectives and selection of methods and activities will enable the class leaders and participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the course and the extent to which they as individuals and as a group are making progress in the areas of competence required of lay speakers. It will also make the detailed planning of the leadership team much easier.

### **METHOD AND ACTIVITIES**

We have already indicated that methods and activities are the specific ways in which participants will be helped to achieve the learning objectives. The selection of the best possible methods and activities is an essential part of your planning. The following are some guidelines that may be helpful to you in this selection.

1. Match the method or activity to the objective. Certain methods and activities are more effective than others in helping to bring about certain types of learning. For example, a lecture is an effective method to increase knowledge about a given subject, but a lecture is less effective in helping persons develop skill in making presentations before an audience.

2. Apply the principle of participation. That is, given a choice between two methods or activities, choose the one that involves the class members in the most active participation.

3. Select a variety of methods and activities. Attention spans are limited, so frequent changes of pace and activity are desirable.

4. Consider the learners. Choose methods and activities that are compatible with their learning styles, their readiness to learn, their physical and emotional

characteristics, and that utilize their past experience.

5. Consider the setting. Methods and activities must be appropriate in terms of the time available to you, the availability of needed resources, the size of the group, and the physical characteristics of your setting.

6. Consider yourselves, the leaders. Methods and activities selected for use in the course should be within the limitations of your skills and abilities and should usually be ones that you have experienced yourself in some other setting.

A wide variety of methods and activities are available to you; in many ways the only limitation is your imagination and creativity. In this leader's guide we suggest some methods and activities in relation to the learning objectives suggested for each of the chapters in the participant's book. For the suggestion of additional methods and activities, refer to the books for leaders in the resource section of this book.

### **EVALUATION**

The purpose of evaluation is to help you improve your program of training for lay speakers. Evaluation should also help participants assess their progress in relation to the learning objectives for the program.

It is suggested that you plan for evaluation at two times in your course: first, at the end of each session with a focus upon the effectiveness of that session and, second, at the end of the course with a focus upon the degree to which participants believe the learning objectives have been fulfilled.

Your approach to evaluation will be guided by some of the same guidelines that apply in the choice of methods and activities for use in your course. The questions, forms, instruments, and approaches to evaluation need to be carefully planned in terms of the information you seek, the characteristics of the setting, the learners, the leaders, and the purposes for which you are evaluating.

Suggested methods of evaluation will be found in *Leading a Group* by Hill and in several other of the books on adult education.

### **OUTLINE OF SESSION**

A detailed outline should be prepared for each session of your course. Some leaders find it helpful to do a basic outline for each session at the time of the initial planning of the total course, reviewing and revising the session outlines as required by the progression of the course. Other leaders determine the objectives for each of the sessions and develop the detailed outline of the first session at the time of the initial planning, completing the detailed outline of subsequent sessions following the first session. In this way, the participants in the course can be involved in the development of the sessions, and the sessions can be more fully related to their needs and interests.

The use of the chart on the following page may be helpful to you in the development of your detailed session outline.

## CHART FOR PREPARING DETAILED SESSION OUTLINES

---

Objectives for this session (normally not more than two or three, frequently only one):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

---

Plan for opening of the session: Time: \_\_\_\_ minutes; leader(s): \_\_\_\_\_ ; procedures:

---

| Time | Learning Activities<br>(list in sequence) | Outline of procedures | Resources<br>Needed | Leader(s) | Room<br>Arrangement |
|------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|
|------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

etc.

---

Plan for closing of the session (including any assignments to be completed before next session):

---

Plan for evaluation of the session:

---

# SUGGESTED OBJECTIVES, METHODS AND ACTIVITIES, AND RESOURCES

In this section we provide some specific suggestions to help you with the detailed planning of your course sessions. Suggestions are provided for objectives, methods and activities, and resources in relation to each of the chapters in the resource book. In addition, some suggestions are provided for the orientation portion of your first class session.

In most instances several alternate approaches are suggested, one or more of which may be appropriate in your situation. Our hope is that you will use these suggestions as a stimulus to develop your own ideas for your class session plans.

As you work with these suggestions, remember that each chapter of the resource book is not necessarily or appropriately to be given exclusive treatment in a single session of your course. You may deal with a content area to gain information and develop understandings in one session and, in later sessions, develop skill in using the information and understandings in spoken communication.

## ORIENTATION TO THE COURSE

### Objective

To become acquainted with one another, begin building a working group, and share experiences with lay speaking.

### Methods and Activities

1. Ask the participants to interview another person in the group whom they do not know for the purpose of preparing to present him or her to the total group. Instruct the interviewers to find out something about the person's interest in or experience with lay speaking. After all persons have been interviewed, ask each person to present to the total group the person he or she interviewed, limiting each presentation to two minutes.

2. Ask the participants to introduce themselves to the group, sharing their experience with lay speaking and their expectations for the course. After all have introduced themselves, record two lists on newsprint: (a) expectations for the course and (b) ways in which persons have served as lay speakers. Use these lists as the basis for additional activities in the session to finalize the objectives for the course and introduce the topic of lay speaking.

### Objective

To finalize the objectives for the course and clarify the overall plan for the course.

### Methods and Activities

1. Present the suggested objectives for the course prepared by the leadership team. In small groups, ask the members of the class to discuss these objectives in

the light of their expectations and to suggest modifications or additional objectives. Ask representatives from each group to report their suggestions to the total group, and after all have reported, reach agreement and acceptance in the total group of the objectives for the course.

2. Present the overall plan for the course prepared by the leadership team. In small groups, ask the members of the class to review the proposed plan in light of the objectives accepted for the course. Hear a report from each group, and in the total group, agree on the overall plan for the course, emphasizing that the detailed planning for each session will be done following the previous session so that the experience of one session can help to shape the next session.

### Objective

To provide information on the resources to be used in the course.

### Methods and Activities

1. Distribute copies of *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book* to each participant. Review the contents, indicate the ways in which you will be using the book in the class, and relate the content areas of your course plan to the specific chapters of the book.

2. Call attention to your resource table, describe the resources on the table, and explain the procedures for arranging for the use of the resources between the sessions of the course.

## YOU AND LAY SPEAKING

### Objective

To develop an understanding of the role and responsibilities of a lay speaker.

### Methods and Activities

1. Divide the participants into groups of three or four persons each. Ask the group members to respond to two questions: (1) Who is a lay speaker? and (2) What does a lay speaker do? Instruct them to select a group reporter to record their conclusions on newsprint and to report to the total group. After fifteen or twenty minutes of discussion in the small groups, convene the total group and ask the reporters to summarize their discussion and present the responses to the questions that they have placed on newsprint. Follow with a general discussion to clarify the reports and develop a better understanding of the role and responsibilities of a lay speaker.

2. Arrange for several persons who have been involved in lay speaking to serve as a resource panel. The panel might include the district director of lay speaking, one or two lay speakers, and a pastor. Ask each panel member to make a five-minute statement

on the role and responsibilities of a lay speaker, illustrating the presentation from his or her personal experience. Follow the presentations with a time for questions and discussion in the total group.

3. Divide the participants into research groups of three persons each. Assign each research group a specific topic on which to gather information for sharing with the total group. Topics could include: the role and responsibility of a lay speaker, lay speaking in *The Book of Discipline*, service opportunities for lay speakers, the place of spoken communication in the Christian witness, and similar topics. Direct them to the available resources in the classroom, emphasizing the resource book and its chapters on "You and Lay Speaking" and "Reaching Out: Service Opportunities for Lay Speakers." After thirty or forty minutes for research and discussion, ask the groups to make a five-minute presentation to the total group on their topic.

4. Ask the participants to read silently paragraph 270 from *The Book of Discipline* (printed in the resource book) and then study the paragraph with them, illustrating its points from your experience and noting the emphasis given in "You and Lay Speaking." Provide time for questions and discussion.

#### **Objective**

To develop an understanding of lay speaking in relation to the ministry of all Christians.

#### **Methods and Activities**

1. Provide each person with a copy of the chapter "The Ministry of All Christians" in *The Book of Discipline* (part 4, chap. 1). Allow time for each person to read the chapter, then lead the class members in a discussion emphasizing its major points. Follow this review of the chapter with a discussion of lay speaking as an expression of the ministry of all Christians.

2. Place on slips of paper Bible references to the importance of the spoken witness to the Christian faith. See "You and Lay Speaking" in the resource book for suggestions. Divide the participants into study groups of three or four persons each, and give each group a slip of paper. Ask the groups to read the reference and then discuss the question: What is the call, challenge, and ministry of a lay speaker? After twenty or thirty minutes of small group discussion, invite the groups to share their insights with one another.

#### **Objective**

To develop knowledge about the requirements and procedures for certification and renewal of certification of lay speakers.

#### **Methods and Activities**

1. Invite the district director of lay speaking or the district superintendent to serve as a resource person for a class session, presenting information and answering questions about the requirements and

procedures for certification and renewal of certification as a lay speaker on your district.

2. Review with the participants paragraphs 271 and 272 of *The Book of Discipline* (printed in the resource book), pointing out the specific ways in which the requirements and procedures are implemented on your district.

#### **Resources**

*The Book of Discipline*, 1976, ¶¶101-10, 270-72.

*Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*, United Methodist Publishing House, 1977.

## **OUR UNITED METHODIST HERITAGE AND TRADITIONS**

#### **Objectives**

To develop an understanding of the distinctive yet common backgrounds of the Methodist, Evangelical, and United Brethren churches out of which The United Methodist Church has been created.

To develop knowledge about the significant contributions of the Wesleys, Asbury, Boehm, Otterbein, Albright, and others to the beginnings and growth of our United Methodist Church.

#### **Methods and Activities**

1. Show the film *Burning Bright*, a presentation of the major aspects and personalities in the history of The United Methodist Church. Follow the film with group discussion, relating the insights of the film to the chapter "Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions" in the resource book.

2. Arrange for three members of the class to make a panel presentation on the distinctive emphases of United Methodism and the contributions of persons from the Methodist, the Evangelical, and the United Brethren traditions to United Methodism. Follow the panel presentations and discussion with a total group discussion on the distinctive emphases of United Methodism, inviting all class members to share their understanding and experiences.

3. Present a lecture to the class on our United Methodist heritage and traditions, summarizing the main points in the chapter in the resource book. Prepare a chronological chart of persons, events, and movements to illustrate your presentation. Follow the lecture with a time for questions from class members and for group discussion.

#### **Objectives**

To develop knowledge and understanding about the United Methodist Doctrinal Statement and Social Principles.

To develop an attitude of acceptance toward persons holding varying theological and social viewpoints within The United Methodist Church.

#### **Methods and Activities**

1. Obtain copies of *Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements* (part 2 of *The Book of Discipline*) and the *Social Principles*

(part 3 of *The Book of Discipline*), and distribute them for reading in advance of the session. In the class session, lead the members of the class in a review of the documents, giving particular attention to section 3 of *Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements*, "Our Theological Task." Follow the review with an opportunity for questions and discussion.

2. Divide the class members into review teams of two or three members each. Give copies of *Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements* to the first team; ask the team to review section 3, "Our Theological Task," and plan an activity in which all of the members of the class will be able to try out the use of the doctrinal guidelines on a current theological concern. To the other teams give copies of the *Social Principles* and assign to each team one or two of the major sections to review, summarize, and plan for a way to present the major ideas to the total class. After thirty or forty minutes, use the remainder of your class time to receive reports and participate in activities planned by the review teams.

#### Objective

To develop skill in sharing our understandings of our United Methodist heritage and traditions with others.

#### Methods and Activities

1. Ask each participant to prepare and present a brief statement about his or her personal Christian beliefs, using material from the chapter in the resource book to illustrate how these beliefs are related to our United Methodist heritage and traditions.

2. Ask each participant to prepare and present a brief biography of one of the major persons in our United Methodist history, emphasizing that person's distinctive contributions.

3. Ask each participant to prepare an outline for a sermon that emphasizes our United Methodist heritage and traditions. In the class session, divide into groups of four to six persons each and review the sermon outlines, members of the class making suggestions for improvement to one another.

#### Resources

*Burning Bright*. 16mm color film, 32 minutes. United Methodist Communications, 1975. Rental: United Methodist Film Service, 1525 McGavock Street, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.

*Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements: Part II, "The Book of Discipline,"* 1972. Reprinted by Graded Press, 1972. Leader's guide available.

*Social Principles of The United Methodist Church*. Reprinted by Board of Church and Society, 1976. Leader's guide available.

Armstrong, James. *United Methodist Primer*. Discipleship Resources, 1976.

Luccock, Halford E., and Garrison, Webb. *Endless Line of Splendor*. United Methodist Communications, 1975.

Norwood, Frederick, A. *The Story of American Methodism*. Abingdon, 1974.

Outler, Albert C. *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*. Discipleship Resources, 1975.

"Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions," *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1977.

## THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

#### Objective

To develop an understanding of some of the elements of the art of communication through the spoken word.

#### Methods and Activities

1. Prepare a lecture on the elements of communication through the spoken word, using the chapter "The Art of Communication" in the resource book as basic resource material. Follow the lecture with a time for questions and group discussion.

2. Ask three participants to serve as members of a panel, preparing in advance to make presentations and lead the class in an exploration of some of the elements of the art of communication, using the chapter in the resource book as basic reference material.

#### Objective

To develop an understanding of the marks of good speaking style and some effective approaches to the delivery of messages.

#### Methods and Activities

1. Review with the class members the material on speaking style and delivery in the chapter "The Art of Communication" in the resource book. Play excerpts from tape recordings of persons making presentations of several kinds, and ask the members of the class to identify the ways in which these persons are or are not effective in speaking style and delivery, using the criteria presented in "The Art of Communication."

2. After a review and discussion in the class session of the sections on speaking style and delivery in "The Art of Communication," ask participants to develop a checklist of marks of good speaking style. Once the class members have agreed on items for the checklist, ask them to make a copy of the list and use it during the coming week with a sermon or other presentation to which they listen, reporting their experience at the next class session.

#### Objective

To develop knowledge about effective ways of selecting themes, organizing material, and preparing for presentations before groups.

#### Methods and Activities

1. Present a lecture on the preparation of presentations, using the material in the chapter "The Art of Communication" as a basic resource and illustrating the lecture from your personal experience. Follow the lecture with an opportunity for class discussion.

2. Divide the class members into work groups of

three or four persons each, and ask them to prepare an outline for a ten-minute presentation on "My Personal Understanding of the Christian Faith," using the steps and procedures suggested in "The Art of Communication." Provide time for each work group to share its outline and experience of using these steps and procedures. Discuss with the total group ways of working more effectively in the preparation of presentations.

### Objective

To develop skill in preparing messages, sermons, and speeches for presentation before groups.

### Methods and Activities

1. Ask the participants to prepare between the sessions of the class a complete outline for a sermon on a theme of their own choosing. In the class session, provide time for participants to critique their outlines and preparation processes in groups of four to six persons each.

2. Divide the class members into work groups of four to six persons each. Ask the persons in each work group to develop an outline for a sermon or other presentation on an assigned topic, such as "My Understanding of the Christian Faith," "Serving Christ," "Why I Am a Christian," or other appropriate topic, beginning their work in the class session and completing the outlines individually between the sessions. At the next session, provide time for a critique of the outlines and the preparation process in the work groups.

### Objective

To develop skill in making various kinds of presentations before groups.

### Methods and Activities

1. Ask class members to prepare presentations of not more than ten minutes in length on a topic of their own choosing. Provide time in the sessions for them to make their presentations while the other class members complete a critique form on each presentation. If time permits, provide an opportunity for immediate feedback to the presentor by class members and a brief discussion of the strengths and points needing improvement in the presentation.

2. Arrange for video tape equipment to be available for use in the session to record presentations by class members, following the presentations with a time for review and critique using the video tapes.

3. Ask class participants to arrange for an opportunity to speak before a class or group, making a tape recording of their presentation. Divide the class into groups of three to five persons to listen to the tapes and critique the presentations.

### Objective

To develop an understanding of effective group functioning in order to facilitate group study and discussion sessions.

### Methods and Activities

1. Present a lecture on the functions needed if a group is to work effectively, emphasizing the task and maintenance functions listed in the handbook *Building the Team*. Illustrate from your experience, and provide time for class discussion of your presentation.

2. Divide your class into two groups, A and B. Ask group A to sit in a circle, with group B sitting in a second circle around group A. Provide members of group B with observation sheets, using the forms found in *Building the Team*. Assign group A a task, such as preparing a worship service. After they have worked at their task for fifteen or twenty minutes, while observers have been noting the task and maintenance functions provided on the observation sheets, stop the process and allow members of group B to share the results of their observations. Discuss ways in which group A could have been more effective in its work. Now reverse the seating and the roles, group B sitting in the center and carrying on a discussion on an assigned topic and group A sitting in the outside circle and completing observer forms. Again, after fifteen to twenty minutes of group work, stop the process and share the observations of members of group A, followed by a general discussion of the ways in which group B could have been more effective.

### Objective

To develop skill in reading materials before a group.

### Methods and Activities

1. Review with the class the suggestions on reading before an audience found in the chapter "The Art of Communication."

2. Assign each class member a scriptural passage to prepare for reading before the class. Provide time for as many persons as possible to read. Ask class members to assess their presentations using the material from the chapter in the resource book.

### Resources

"The Art of Communication," *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1977.

Hill, Dorothy L. *Leading a Group*. Board of Education, The Methodist Church, 1966 (available from Discipleship Resources).

Rand, Willard J. *Building the Team* (rev. ed.). Resource System for the Local Church Council on Ministries. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1977.

Sleeth, Ronald E. *Look Who's Talking! A Guide for Lay Speakers in the Church*. Abingdon, 1977.

Sleeth, Ronald E. *Proclaiming the Word*. Abingdon, 1964.

## EXPRESSING YOUR FAITH

### Objective

To develop an understanding of ministry as a responsibility of all Christians and lay speaking as an expression of that ministry.

## Methods and Activities

1. Assign the chapter "You and Lay Speaking" and the first section of the chapter "Expressing Your Faith" in the resource book for advance reading by class members. Ask persons to prepare a single paragraph summarizing their understanding of lay speaking as ministry.

2. Review the chapter on the ministry of all Christians in *The Book of Discipline* with the class members. Emphasize the general ministry as inclusive of the ordained, the consecrated, and the lay ministries. Divide the class members into discussion groups of four to six persons each, and ask them to discuss lay speaking as an expression of ministry, using the statements they have prepared in advance and the information from the chapter in the *Discipline*. After a time of discussion, invite the groups to share their insights with one another.

### Objective

To develop and clarify personal understandings of the nature of faith, God, Christ, Holy Spirit, human personhood, sin, and salvation.

## Methods and Activities

1. Ask participants to read the chapter "Expressing Your Faith" in the resource book and to read as extensively as possible in the related books on your resource table.

2. Present a summary lecture of the basic insights of "Expressing Your Faith"; include ideas from "Our Theological Task" in part 2 of *The Book of Discipline*. After the lecture, lead class members in a discussion sharing their personal understandings of the topics you have treated and the ways in which they differ from or agree with the material presented by Richard Harrington in the resource book.

3. Divide the class members into work groups of four or five persons each, assign each group a different topic such as our understanding of God, of Christ, of Holy Spirit, of human personhood, and the other topics discussed in "Expressing Your Faith" in the resource book, and ask the group members to prepare a summary statement of what they understand to be basic Christian belief in relation to their assigned topic. Encourage them to use the resource book, their Bibles, and other resources in the room in the preparation of their statements. After an adequate work time, invite representatives from each group to share their statements and to engage the other class members in discussion to help them clarify their ideas.

### Objective

To develop skill in expressing one's personal understanding and experience of the Christian faith.

## Methods and Activities

1. Divide the class members into groups of three persons each. Assign to all a topic, such as "My Understanding of God" or "My Understanding and Experience of Sin and Salvation." In each group of

three, one person is to be the speaker, one the clarifier, and one the observer. The speaker will have eight minutes to state his or her personal response to the topic, during which time the clarifier will help the speaker to state his or her thoughts clearly. The observer should take notes on the conversation, and after the eight minute time period, this person will have two minutes in which to share observations on ways in which the clarifier was helpful and points at which the clarifier could have been more helpful. For a second and third round, specify a different topic and assign new roles to each person. In this way each person will have the opportunity of being speaker, clarifier, and observer.

2. On individual cards describe several situations in which persons might have an opportunity to express their personal faith understandings: a coffee time conversation at the office, a church school class discussion, a presentation and discussion at a civic club, a dinner conversation at home, and other similar situations. Assign each situation to a different group of four or five persons, allowing them ten minutes to prepare for a simulation of the situation. Let the group members present their simulation in turn, showing how, in the situation presented to them, they would express their faith understanding. Follow each presentation with a total group discussion of the situation, the strengths of the simulation, and alternate ways of approaching the situation.

3. With the class members sitting in a circle, ask each person to think of one sentence that expresses his or her personal understanding and experience of God. Ask each person in turn to share his or her sentence, permitting no discussion or comment until all have shared. Follow with no more than fifteen minutes to clarify and discuss the ideas presented. Repeat the procedure with one or two other doctrinal areas as time permits.

### Objective

To develop skill in expressing one's personal faith through presentations before groups.

## Methods and Activities

1. Ask each participant to prepare and present before the class a six- to eight-minute presentation on one of the major topics in the chapter "Expressing Your Faith" in the resource book. Prepare for this activity an evaluation form that will help participants give feedback to the presentors on their speaking style, delivery, and the organization and development of their ideas. Allow a brief time for a sharing of reactions to the appraisal in groups of four or five persons each.

2. Ask each participant to arrange an opportunity—through a church school class, the pastor, or other leader or organization in their church—to serve as a devotional leader or speaker before a group, using as their theme "My Personal Christian Faith." Ask the

participants to arrange for audio or video taping of their presentations so that they may be shared with the class for their evaluation.

### Resources

"Expressing Your Faith," *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1977.

Colaw, Emerson. *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian*. Tidings, 1972.

*God's Action, Our Affirmation*. Graded Press, 1976.

*Doctrine and Doctrinal Statements: Part II, "The Book of Discipline,"* 1972. Reprinted by Graded Press, 1972. Leader's guide available.

## USING AND INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

### Objective

To develop an understanding of how the Bible was written, how the canon was established, and how the Bible has been translated and transmitted to us for use today.

### Methods and Activities

1. Present a lecture illustrated with charts and diagrams to share the basic information on the writing, development, and translation of the Bible. Follow the lecture with a time for questions and discussion.

2. Ask three teams of two each from the class to prepare presentations on these topics: how the Bible was written, how the canon was established, and how the Bible has been translated and transmitted to us for use today. Encourage the teams to review the chapter "Using and Interpreting the Bible" in the resource book; to consult their Bible commentaries, dictionaries, and handbooks; and to examine the other resources on your table. In the class session, provide time for presentations by each of the teams and for questions and discussion by the class members.

### Objective

To develop an understanding of what constitutes responsible use of the Bible.

### Methods and Activities

1. Ask two members of the class to prepare in advance of the session a presentation on the responsible use of the Bible. Suggest that they consult the chapter in the resource book, the books *The Bible and You* by Edward Blair and *Getting Straight About the Bible* by Horace Weaver, and their pastors. Follow their presentation with discussion, first in small groups and then in the total group.

2. Divide the class members into groups of four or five persons each. Ask each group to develop five principles for the responsible use of the Bible, recording these on newsprint. After fifteen or twenty minutes, ask the group members to share their principles with the total group. Have a general discussion for clarification, and seek to arrive at

consensus on at least ten basic principles for the responsible use of the Bible.

### Objective

To develop an understanding of what it means to refer to the Bible as the Word of God.

### Methods and Activities

1. Divide the class members into pairs to discuss for no more than ten minutes the question, Is the Bible the Word of God? Follow the discussion in pairs with a total group discussion of the question in which you help participants to clarify their understanding of the Bible.

2. Ask two members of the class to prepare in advance for a debate on the statement "The Bible Is the Word of God," one taking the positive and one the negative side. Provide time in the class session for the debate, concluding with a time of general discussion to help class members clarify their thinking on this issue.

### Objective

To develop skill in the responsible use, study, and interpretation of the Bible.

### Methods and Activities

1. Prepare a brief lecture on the use of resources in Bible study, and then have the members of the class engage in some practice exercises that will help them to become familiar with various commentaries, dictionaries, and translations of the Bible.

2. Divide the class members into work groups of four or five persons each, and assign them topics on which to prepare presentations for the class using Bible commentaries, dictionaries, and handbooks. Provide time for each group to make their presentation, and ask class members to note the way in which they evidence use of the resource materials.

3. Ask each participant to prepare in advance of the session a sermon or other presentation on a biblical theme. Provide time in the class sessions for presentations by class members, followed by the use of an evaluation form in order that class members may give them feedback on their use and interpretation of the Bible.

### Resources

"Using and Interpreting the Bible," *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1977.

Barclay, William. *Introducing the Bible*. Abingdon, 1972.

Blair, Edward P. *The Bible and You*. Abingdon, 1953.

Weaver, Horace. *Getting Straight About the Bible*. Abingdon, 1975.

*The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. 5 vols. Abingdon, 1962 and 1976.

Laymon, Charles M., ed. *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Abingdon, 1971.

Buttrick, George A., ed. *The Interpreter's Bible*. 12 vols. Abingdon. 1952-57.

## UNDERSTANDING AND PLANNING PUBLIC WORSHIP

### Objective

To develop an understanding of the historical development of public worship and the purposes and role of worship in the life of the Christian and the Christian church today.

### Methods and Activities

1. Invite a pastor to serve as a resource person, making a presentation on the historical development of public worship and the purpose and role of worship in the life of the Christian and the Christian church today. Follow the presentation with a time for questions and discussion.

2. Ask the class members to brainstorm responses to the statement "The purpose of Christian worship is—" while you record their answers on newsprint. Follow with a presentation of the basic ideas in the chapter "Understanding and Planning Public Worship" in the resource book. Conclude this activity with a time for questions and discussion in the total class group.

### Objective

To develop an understanding of some of the principles to be considered in planning for public worship.

### Methods and Activities

1. Ask the participants to interview their pastor prior to the class session, asking the pastor about the principles and approaches that he or she uses when planning (a) the Sunday worship of the congregation and (b) a worship service for a group meeting. In the class session hear reports of the interviews and then record on newsprint a list of principles to be considered when planning for public worship.

2. Ask a team of two or three persons to prepare to lead the class in a consideration of some of the principles to be considered when planning public worship, using as reference material the chapter in the resource book, the books on worship on your resource table, and *Word and Table*. Ask the participants to bring to the session a bulletin from a service of worship that they have recently attended. Following the presentation by the team members, ask participants in small groups to evaluate the orders of service found in the bulletins and then to share their insights with the total group.

### Objective

To develop knowledge and understanding of some of the basic resources and patterns for corporate worship in The United Methodist Church.

### Methods and Activities

1. Invite a member of your conference committee or commission on worship to serve as a resource person, introducing the class members to the basic resources and patterns of worship for corporate worship in The United Methodist Church. Follow the presentation with a time for questions and discussion.

2. Obtain copies of *The Book of Worship* and *The Book of Hymns* for use in the session. Review with the class members the basic orders of service contained in these books and the resources available in these books for the planning of corporate worship. Also, refer the class members to the order of service from *Word and Table* printed in the resource book and present some of the background for this order.

3. Ask class members to bring copies of the Sunday bulletin from the church they attend. Review the orders of service and compare them with the orders in the basic resource books mentioned above. Discuss the selection of resources and the preparation of an order of service.

### Objective

To develop skill in planning for corporate worship.

### Methods and Activities

1. Ask each class member to prepare a suggested order of service for use in a United Methodist Church on a Sunday and a suggested order of service for one other setting, such as a nursing home, campground, or organization meeting. Ask the class members to put their suggested orders of service on newsprint or to prepare duplicated copies for distribution in the class. Review the orders in a class session, allowing members to make suggestions for change and improvement in the light of the principles and purposes for worship suggested in the resource book.

2. Divide the class members into teams of two persons each. Assign to each team responsibility for preparing a worship service for one of the class sessions. Use smaller or larger numbers of persons on the team depending on your class size. Be sure to include time for reaction to the worship services at each of the sessions.

### Resources

"Understanding and Planning Public Worship," *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1977.

*The Book of Hymns*. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1964.

*The Book of Worship*. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1964.

*Word and Table: A Basic Pattern of Sunday Worship for United Methodists*. Abingdon, 1976.

Dunkle, William F., Jr., and Quillian, Joseph D., Jr. *Companion to the Book of Worship*. Abingdon, 1970.

Gealy, Fred D.; Lovelace, Austin C.; and Young, Carlton R. *Companion to the Hymnal*. Abingdon, 1970.

Randolph, David J., ed. *Ventures in Worship*. 3 vols. Abingdon, 1969-73.

White, James F. *Christian Worship in Transition*. Abingdon, 1976.

White, James F. *New Forms of Worship*. Abingdon, 1971.

## REACHING OUT: SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAY SPEAKERS

### Objective

To develop an understanding and knowledge about the variety of service opportunities available to lay speakers.

### Methods and Activities

1. Invite a panel of persons including the district superintendent, a pastor, the district director of lay speaking, and one or two lay speakers to share with the class their knowledge about and experience with the service opportunities available to lay speakers, both in local churches and through the district organization. Allow time for questions and discussion following the presentations.

2. Ask class members to read the chapters "You and Lay Speaking" and "Reaching Out" in the resource book. Also, ask them to interview their pastors after they have read these chapters, asking the pastors about the service opportunities available to lay speakers in their local churches and in the district. Invite members of the class to share reports of the interviews as part of a discussion of these chapters from the resource book.

### Resources

"You and Lay Speaking," "Reaching Out: Service Opportunities for Lay Speakers," *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*. United Methodist Publishing House, 1977.

## A SAMPLE TOPICAL OUTLINE FOR AN INTRODUCTORY COURSE

This is a sample topical outline for a course in which sessions will be held for two hours once each week for five weeks. See the section on session plans for a chart to help with the detailed planning of these sessions.

|             | First Hour                                                                                            | Second Hour                                           |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| First Week  | Orientation to the Course<br>You and Lay Speaking                                                     | Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions          |
| Second Week | The Art of Communication                                                                              | Expressing Your Faith                                 |
| Third Week  | Practice Session: Speaking Content: Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions; Our Christian Faith | Using and Interpreting the Bible                      |
| Fourth Week | Practice Session: Speaking and Reading. Content: Our Christian Faith and the Bible                    | Understanding and Planning Public Worship             |
| Fifth Week  | Practice Session: Public Worship                                                                      | Reaching Out: Service Opportunities for Lay Speakers. |

It is to be especially noted that in this topical outline provision is made in the third through the fifth sessions for a specific practice session in which attention can be given to the development of skills in speaking.

## RESOURCES

### FOR LEADERS

Hill, Dorothy LaCroix. *Leading a Group*. Board of Education, The Methodist Church, 1966 (available from Discipleship Resources).

Knowles, Malcom. *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*. Association Press, 1970.  
Leyboldt, Martha M. *Forty Ways to Teach in Groups*. Judson Press, 1967.

Little, Sara. *Learning Together in the Christian Fellowship*. John Knox Press, 1960.  
Minor, Harold D., ed. *Creative Procedures for Adult Groups*. Abingdon, 1966.

#### **FOR THE LAY SPEAKER PROGRAM**

Resources to support the lay speaker program are prepared by the Division of Lay Life and Work of the Board of Discipleship, published by The United Methodist Publishing House, and distributed through the Cokesbury Regional Service Centers. For a complete list of these resources, see your current *Cokesbury Church and Church School Supplies Catalog*.

#### **Basic Course for Lay Speaker Training**

##### *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*

A reading and study book for lay speakers and prospective lay speakers and for use in the basic training course. It provides an introduction to lay speaking and assists the user in the development of the understandings and skills needed by lay speakers. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1977. \$2.25.

##### *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Leader's Guide*

Guidance for persons responsible for planning and leading basic training programs for lay speakers and prospective lay speakers. It includes suggested learning objectives, methods, and activities for training sessions. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1977. \$1.25.

#### **Advanced Courses for Lay Speakers**

##### *Advanced Courses for Lay Speakers*

Basic guidance for the planning of advanced courses for lay speaker training. The United Methodist Publishing House, 1977. \$2.25. It includes a section on planning and administering advanced courses and detailed guidance for courses in four different areas. Topics for courses and related textbooks suggested for class use include:

*Effective Communication Through Public Speaking*  
Text: Sleeth, Ronald E. *Look Who's Talking! A Guide for Lay Speakers in the Church*. Abingdon, 1977. \$3.95.

##### *Understanding and Using the Bible*

Text: Barclay, William J. *Introducing the Bible*. Abingdon, 1972. \$1.45.

##### *Understanding and Leading Public Worship*

Text: *Word and Table: A Basic Pattern of Sunday Worship for United Methodists*. Abingdon, 1976. \$2.50.

##### *Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions*

Text: Armstrong, James. *United Methodist Primer*. Discipleship Resources, 1976. \$1.50.

##### *Basic Christian Beliefs*

Text: Colaw, Emerson. *Beliefs of a United Methodist Christian*. Tidings, 1972. \$2.25.

#### **Handbook for Leaders**

##### *Handbook: Lay Speaking in The United Methodist Church*

Basic guidance for district and conference leaders responsible for planning and administering the lay speaker program.

#### **OTHER RESOURCES**

##### *Lay Speaker Credential Card*

A wallet-sized card to acknowledge the certification of a lay speaker, with space for a record of the annual renewal. Ten cents each; \$8.00 for one hundred.

##### *Lay Speaker's Certificate*

A certificate designed for framing that acknowledges certification and includes space for the record of annual renewal. Ten cents each; \$8.00 for one hundred.

##### *Certified Lay Speaker Pin*

A lapel pin with the United Methodist cross and flame and designation "Certified Lay Speaker." \$3.75 each.

##### *Annual Report of Lay Speaker*

A form for an annual report to the Charge Conference with a copy for the district or conference Committee on Lay Speaking. It includes a place to request renewal of certification and space for the recommendation of the Charge Conference. Included in the Charge Conference Packet; see Cokesbury catalog.

Cokesbury Regional Service Centers from which resources and catalogs may be ordered:

1910 Main Street, Dallas, Texas 75221

1600 Queen Anne Road, Teaneck, New Jersey 07666

Fifth and Grace Streets, Richmond, Virginia 23261

201 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37202

1661 North Northwest Highway, Park Ridge, Illinois 60068

85 McAllister Street, San Francisco, California 94102

Discipleship Resources, Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202, has many resources that can be used in lay speaking training. Write for their current catalog, which contains books, study resources, and leader helps for the local church in the areas of education, evangelism, worship, stewardship, and leadership development.

For information on supplemental resources and assistance in developing your program, contact:

Section on Leadership Development and Training

Division of Lay Life and Work

Board of Discipleship

Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202

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# INTRODUCTION TO LAY SPEAKING

## LEADER'S GUIDE

Prepared by  
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The United Methodist Church

*Introduction to Lay Speaking: Leader's Guide* was prepared especially to guide those persons who plan and lead a basic course for lay speakers and prospective lay speakers. It suggests practical ways to organize and plan a basic course and presents objectives, methods, activities, and resources for class sessions. It follows each of the chapters in *Introduction to Lay Speaking: Resource Book*. Topics for sessions include:

- You and Lay Speaking
- Our United Methodist Heritage and Traditions
- The Art of Communication
- Expressing Your Faith
- Using and Interpreting the Bible
- Understanding and Planning Public Worship
- Reaching Out: Service Opportunities for Lay Speakers

All class leadership team members need copies of this leader's guide.

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